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HELD AT THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY, COLORADO,
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**MILITARY
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OF THE
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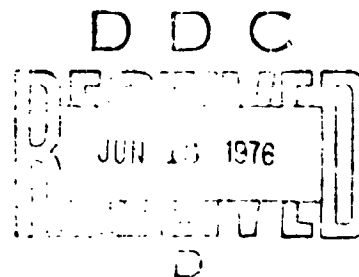
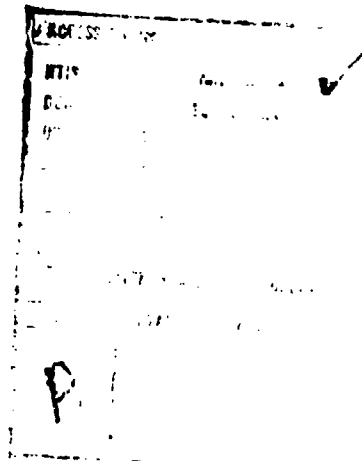
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United States Air Force Academy
10-11 October 1974

Edited by
Stanley J. Underdal, Major, USAF, Air Force Academy



Office of Air Force History, Headquarters USAF
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INTRODUCTION

As we enter the Bicentennial anniversary year commemorating our nation's independence, a flood of scholarly writings on the Revolutionary War is being turned out by book publishers and scholarly periodicals. One special conference after another, together with a larger-than-usual number of sessions at the annual convention meetings of the major professional history organizations, is devoted to an examination of our Revolutionary heritage. In recent years historians have begun to ask new questions about the circumstances that surrounded the achievement of American independence, have begun to examine the everyday aspects of life and death in that era, have emphasized the study of society "from the bottom up" instead of "from the top down," and have sharpened their analytical skills through the use of new kinds of evidence and new kinds of tools such as computer-assisted statistical runs.

With the plethora of conference proceedings, articles and books now becoming readily available to the interested reader—enough to satisfy even the most gluttonous reading appetite—why should this publication be so presumptuous as to claim a degree of uniqueness that warrants attention by scholars, students and interested laymen? Somehow in the midst of our celebratory scholarship, the military history of the American Revolution, while certainly not being neglected by historians, has not been accorded a great deal of interest by the reading public. Perhaps that is because in the minds of many people so much of past military history has been "blood-and-guts" battle history or self-serving accounts of how various high-ranking generals, by dint of fortune or ability, managed almost singlehandedly to "win" this or that war. Perhaps also our reaction to recent American military involvements has caused an involuntary shrinking away from the study of military history except by dedicated professional historians or by polemicists seeking evidence to support their belief that all military activities are evil and antithetical to basic societal morality.

Despite popular conceptions, not all military history is traditional battle history or memoirs. Many military historians are asking the same questions of their subject material and using the same new analytical tools as are their compatriot scholars in other areas of historical research. They also are looking at history from the bottom up to discover the roles of such neglected groups as women, children, Blacks and common soldiers in the various wartime generations. They also are examining more closely the decision-making process to discover why civilian leaders, commanders and soldiers act as they do.

The Sixth Military History Symposium sought to bring together military historians of the American Revolution who were asking the new questions and using the new research tools. The result, we believe, was a blend of careful scholarship and provocative comment that commends itself to anyone interested in the history of our nation's birth. Overarching the entire program was the subject of the annual Harmon Memorial Lecture, "The American Revolution Today."

Despite a sudden illness that prevented the participation of Professor John R. Alden of Duke University and the inconvenient calling of a British general election that demanded the presence of Professor Esmond Wright of the University of London, the symposium began on schedule the morning of 10 October 1974. In the audience were more than 200 historians from the United States and Canada together with members of the Academy Cadet Wing, Academy staff and faculty. Colonel Alfred F. Hurley, Professor and Head of the Department of History, introduced the Academy Superintendent, Major General James R. Allen, who welcomed the visitors and commented on the threefold purpose of the continuing symposia: to support original research in military history, to provide written contributions to military history through the publication of the symposia proceedings, and to encourage Academy cadets to pursue further study of their chosen profession. General Allen emphasized his belief that an appreciation of military history is essential to the success of battlefield commanders.

The First Session

After General Allen's welcoming remarks, Colonel Hurley introduced John Shy of the University of Michigan who delivered the Seventeenth Annual Harmon Memorial Lecture in Military History entitled, "The American Revolution Today." Modestly denying that he was trying to present an esoteric reinterpretation of the Revolutionary struggle, Professor Shy discussed several concepts about the war that have been considered to be so basically true that historians have neglected to examine them closely.

One accepted fact about the Revolutionary War, said Shy, is that the British lost. Historians have explained Britain's failure as the result of faulty tactics, the poor quality of military commanders, corruption and confusion among the civilian leaders in London, a collapse of British public opinion after the Yorktown defeat, and the lack of political flexibility in the British cabinet and House of Commons. Professor Shy argued eloquently against the importance of these factors and suggested instead that the cause of British defeat lay more in the circumstances of the war than in any action taken or not taken by British leaders. Without great good luck Britain's objective was not attainable.

A second verity about the war is that the Americans won, but it would be more accurate, according to Shy, to say that they did not lose. Popular support for the war declined steadily after the high point of enthusiasm in 1775. People grew weary of worthless money, of supply shortages, of bullying local committees of safety, and of seemingly endless fighting. In the end the Americans did not win the war, but they did not lose it. Again circumstances made it possible for the Revolutionaries to hang on until the British quit, and only their great fear of anarchy, disunion and resultant national disgrace made it possible for the Americans to put aside individual differences long enough to create a unified nation.

Perhaps the greatest lesson that the professional soldier can learn from the American Revolution, said Shy, is that military commanders may not be the key determinants of victory and defeat—they are just part of “a set of complexly interacting elements.” Such a view does indeed move “the commander from stage center into the chorus. . . .”

The Second Session

On the afternoon of 10 October, Lieutenant Colonel Philip D. Caine, Deputy Head of the Academy's Department of History, introduced the session chairman, George A. Billias of Clark University. Professor Billias set the stage for the session's two principal papers on British and American strategy-making by explaining that most eighteenth-century warfare was quite different from that practiced by the Napoleonic campaigners and others of the nineteenth century. It was limited warfare fought with limited means for limited objectives. There was no desire to involve the general population, and soldiers were considered to be natural resources that one expended only very carefully. In this kind of warfare “ingenuity and maneuver were more prized than impetuosity in combat.” All of this materially affected strategic planning on both sides of the battleline.

Ita D. Gruber of Rice University, the first principal speaker, examined the origins of British strategy and concluded that British leaders at home and on the American battlefield developed varying strategies based upon their individual “understanding of the rebellion, their attitudes toward it, and the special circumstances of the war itself.”

Although most British strategists had previous military experience, very few had any previous experience or training in planning a war. They all had some knowledge of the strategies employed during the Seven Years War in Europe and America, and some probably had read contemporary books on military history and theory put out by publishers on the Continent. Nevertheless, continental theories and practices had little influence upon British policymakers.

Never did the British develop a cohesive plan to prosecute the war. What developed was a confusing jumble of conflicting strategies that had little chance of success. Even when directions were issued sporadically by the ministry in Britain, they often were ignored by military commanders in America. Not only was there no cohesion in strategic planning, but an understanding of the nature of the rebellion was based upon ignorance and wishful thinking. Professor Gruber ended his paper with the telling illustration of General Cornwallis making his way to Yorktown, "not merely in pursuit of the old, contending illusions of popular support and a decisive battle, but also in defiance of one superior and with the encouragement of another."

The second paper of the session, by Lieutenant Colonel Dave R. Palmer of the Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, focused upon the strategic ability of General George Washington. Colonel Palmer concluded that Washington was a superb strategist who clung to no single strategy, but chose a new and proper one for each changing phase of the war.

Colonel Palmer divided the war into four distinct phases. The first phase was the 14 months from the Battle of Lexington to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. During this period the Patriots had to take the offensive in order to eject British authorities and gain control of the colonies. During this period Washington attacked at every opportunity within the constraints of his limited physical capabilities. The second phase lasted about a year and a half and called for an entirely different strategy. Now the Americans had to hold on in the face of increasing enemy strength, and "not losing became the foremost goal of the Continental Army." Washington chose the proper defensive strategy of "always fighting with his wagons hitched and facing the rear."

With the entry of France into the war in 1778, argued Palmer, a third phase began that offered once more the hope of victory. Winning became more important than not losing. During this phase Washington seized the initiative and labored to coordinate the allied arms for a speedy military conclusion to the war. The result was the Battle of Yorktown. But the 2 years after the victory at Yorktown were perilous ones for the Americans. This fourth phase of the war was marked by the possibility of winning the war but losing the peace. Washington had to hold his army together, keep it from dissipating, until the final peace settlement had been resolved. He successfully navigated the narrow passage between squandering his army in futile offensives and allowing it to dissolve because of inactivity. During all four phases of the war Washington understood what had to be done and did it.

Commenting on Gruber's paper Professor Billias argued that little experience or training in strategy was not a suitable explanation for poor British decision-making. The British had managed to devise successful strategies in previous wars even though their ministers and commanders had been equally inexperienced in such matters. Nor was it particularly important that no great minister emerged in Britain to direct the war effort, for ill-defined lines of authority were a perennial British problem that did not prevent the development of successful strategies in other wars. Billias particularly disagreed with Gruber's contention that British commanders recognized the war as an unconventional one and pursued unconventional strategy almost all of the time. At best, said Billias, the verdict must be, "not proved," until Gruber properly defines what he means by unconventional warfare and demonstrates the precise application of unconventional strategy.

Billias criticized Colonel Palmer for being too simplistic, for disregarding too many other individuals and agencies that were involved in the making of strategy. Congress, individual American field commanders, French officers, and state governments, to name a few. Billias also disagreed with Palmer's rigid four-phase division of the war and proposed a three-phase theory of his own. The first phase, strategic offensive, ended with the collapse of the Canadian campaign in 1776. The second phase, a strategy of erosion, lasted from the middle of 1776 until the initial planning for Yorktown in May of 1781. During this period Washington sought to preserve his army and wear down the patience of the British. The third phase was the strategic offensive focused on Yorktown.

Finally, Billias took Palmer to task for his assessment of Washington's abilities. Only fortuitous circumstances time and time again saved the American general from calamitous defeat. According to Billias, Washington was "a conventional strategist who resorted to the orthodox principles of eighteenth-century warfare. . . . His greatest achievement as a general was not as a strategist, but as the builder of an army."

The spirited discussion that followed the papers and commentary focused upon such issues as the importance of logistics in shaping military strategy during the war, the role of naval strategy, and British unfamiliarity with the geographical immensity of America. It was obvious that the discussion could have gone on for hours had not time constraints intruded.

The Banquet Address

After the traditional symposium banquet on the evening of 10 October, Rear Admiral John D. Hayes, United States Navy (Retired), spoke on the subject, "A Seaman's View of the American Revolution." Admiral

Hayes argued that the Revolution basically was a naval war lost by the British because of a logistical breakdown. Britain faced the impossible task of having to supply its armies entirely with goods transported from home. Commerce warfare may have been the key determinant of American victory and British defeat.

Hayes pointed out that the maritime history of the Revolution has yet to be written, for the exploits of American commerce raiders virtually have been ignored and the activities of the French fleet have not received proper consideration by historians. The Admiral concluded with four suggestions for the audience: obtain a better understanding of the French naval contribution to the war effort, become familiar with sadly-neglected studies of important American commerce raiders, make greater use of the *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* series currently becoming available, and encourage the editing and publishing of letters written by and to the war's naval captains.

The Third Session

The third session began on the morning of 11 October with Major Gary Anderson, Executive Director of the symposium and member of the Academy History Department, introducing the chairman of the session, Professor Don Higginbotham of the University of North Carolina. Professor Higginbotham at once introduced the two principal speakers, Professor Robert M. Calhoon of the Greensboro campus of the University of North Carolina and Professor Richard H. Kohn of Rutgers University.

Professor Calhoon spoke on the subject, "Civil, Revolutionary, or Partisan: The Loyalists and the Nature of the War for Independence." Calhoon defined the three terms mentioned in the title of his paper and described at length the nature of Loyalist sentiment and activity at various times and in various locations during the war. He then postulated that "the War for Independence was partisan on its periphery, civil only when Britain threatened to gain secure control over a large territorial area, and revolutionary in discontinuous moments when the prospect of American victory portended social changes which were terrifying to cohesive and self-conscious Loyalist and neutralist constituencies." Perhaps a better term to define the domestic nature of the war, said Calhoon, was the concept of "internal war" defined by Harry Eckstein as "any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies."

The Loyalists plainly understood both the strengths and the weaknesses of the Revolutionary social order. They were convinced that only the overwhelming use of force, both conventional and irregular, could undermine that order successfully. During the last half of the war

this fixation caused them to view the conflict "as an instrument of punishment, vengeance, and retribution and as a technique of social control." The Loyalists comprised a very large minority of the American public and could have been Britain's strongest asset in the war were it not for one thing: that resource could be mobilized effectively only at a price that Britain could not afford to pay. The mother country would have had to dispatch a huge number of troops to occupy the vast regions where these "fearful, insecure subjects of the Crown resided and thereby to overcome the sense of weakness which immobilized these defensive people." Britain did not have enough troops and, therefore, did not get the expected massive military support of Loyalist elements.

The irony of the Loyalists' desire in the last years of the war--to see British armies scourge American society for the sins of ingratitude and disobedience--is that it was a mirror image of the mixture of political wisdom and moral absolutism that characterized the ideology of their Patriot opponents.

The second speaker of the session, Professor Richard H. Kohn, spoke on the subject, "The Murder of the Militia System in the Aftermath of the American Revolution." By the time the War for Independence ended, the militia system had become all but sacrosanct in the minds of the vast majority of Americans. This reflected in part more than a century of American political and military development, but the Revolution greatly strengthened the militia tradition. During the war the British regular army became the symbol of monarchy and tyranny while the concept of the citizen soldier, central to the militia system, became the symbol of freedom and American nationhood. Ironically, said Professor Kohn, the Revolution not only strengthened the militia system tradition, but it set in motion the forces that ultimately destroyed it as an institution.

Despite the important services of the militia during the war, General Washington and his advisors saw it as unpredictable in nearly every military situation. They believed that the new nation had to have a national army, not a hodgepodge of forces subject to individual state control. "A peacetime force was needed to keep alive military knowledge, to prepare for future conflicts, and to act as the nucleus for wartime armies." As realists, Washington and the other nationalists recognized that it would be impossible to get the American public to support the idea of a substantial standing army. Their only hope of success lay in the reform of the militia system.

For more than a decade the nationalists advocated a three-part reform program: make the militia uniform in equipment, doctrine and

organization; increase annual training and enforce attendance; institute classing—single out young men, rather than the old, for militia training. But every substantive reform measure foundered upon the rock issue of national or state sovereignty. Only the annihilation of General Arthur St. Clair's army in Ohio in 1791 spurred significant effort to pass a uniform militia act. The resultant act of 1792 was so weak that it contained none of the three basic reforms advocated by the nationalist reformers.

The reform movement failed and the militia system continued to decline as a viable institution, argued Professor Kohn, until by 1800 even the militia's champions realized that "even citizen soldiers must be well trained and that the defense of the republic must be managed by a single authority."

Chairman/commentator Don Higginbotham, while expressing substantial agreement with both papers, posed several questions. Calhoun emphasized the existence of important social tensions in Revolutionary society, but several recent historians have questioned whether such tensions were increasing or decreasing. Calhoun could make an important contribution to that discussion if he would explain exactly what were the Loyalists' societal views. Higginbotham also wondered if the pacification programs advocated by the Loyalists always emphasized violence and vengeance, or if at least some of them were similar to today's pacification programs which emphasize a winning-over of the people through the promise of a better life.

Professor Higginbotham was not completely satisfied that the militia was "murdered." That would imply that the militia once had been a viable institution, a condition that he doubted ever was true. "What was there to murder?" He concluded his commentary with a tantalizing thought: perhaps the militia lived on as it always had been—"a viable tradition in terms of ideas, concepts and attitudes, if not as a viable institution."

Two questions dominated the discussion period. First, to what extent did Loyalists have the ear of the British commanders and how did class attitudes affect the acceptance or rejection of advice? Second, were the nationalist reformers of the militia motivated more by political considerations or by the military reality of defeated American armies? To the first question Professor Calhoun replied that wealthy Loyalists certainly were able to talk to the British commanders, but whether those Loyalists' ideas were the same as those of lower-class Loyalists awaits research into the social profile of the armed Loyalist units. Professor Kohn answered the second question by venturing that, although political and military considerations were linked, the primary motivation was political.

The Fourth Session

Lieutenant Colonel David MacIsaac, Deputy for Military History of the Academy History Department, opened the afternoon session by introducing the chairman, Professor Theodore Ropp of Duke University. Professor Ropp immediately introduced the first of the session's two speakers, George F. Scheer of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, who spoke on the subject, "Washington and His Lieutenants: Some Problems in Command."

Mr. Scheer emphasized that one of Washington's greatest problems was to hold his army together. In order to do that he had to keep his generals in line. Only through tenacity, patience and tact was Washington able to mediate between the touchy prima donnas in high positions under his command. From the beginning he had to deal with generals, appointed by Congress because of political or sectional considerations, who were supersensitive about their commands and about their line positions on the ladder of authority. Time and again the Commander in Chief salved the wounded pride of officers whom he considered to be worthy of responsible command while at the same time he realized that their grievances often were petty.

According to Scheer, Washington's success with his men stemmed from a rare combination of strength and decency of character and a commanding physical presence. While he may not have inspired an outpouring of love from his followers, he did inspire "awe, respect, admiration and confidence." When the war ended, no man commanded more respect and admiration than General Washington, and no other man so deserved it.

Dr. John R. Sellers of the Library of Congress presented the second paper of the session on the subject, "The Common Soldier in the American Revolution." Reflecting a new trend in historical scholarship, the statistical analysis of the lower rungs of American society, Dr. Sellers discussed his examination of the social profile of 658 noncommissioned officers and privates in the Virginia Militia and the Virginia Continental Line who were selected at random from the Revolutionary War Pension Application Files in the National Archives.

Sellers found that the rank and file of Virginia's soldiers was composed of young white males between the ages of 16 and 25 who were the sons of poor farmers and poor artisans. The bottom ranks of the military were drawn from the bottom ranks of civilian society. Most of these young men enlisted in order to receive cash or land bounties, not because they were enthusiastic about the struggle for independence. Indeed, most privates left the army after their first term of enlistment expired; very few reenlisted.

Most of Virginia's noncommissioned veterans left the state after the war, almost invariably heading westward in search of new land and a new start in life. Many moved several times before they finally settled permanently. Strikingly, those who had started life poor almost always ended life in the same social position. At least for this sample of the Revolutionary generation, the poor tended to stay poor despite whatever economic inducement caused them to enlist for a time in the fight for liberty.

Session chairman Theodore Ropp, acting in his dual role as commentator, raised a point for thought addressed more to the audience than to the session's speakers: perhaps someone ought to study the middle ranks of the Revolutionary army, the noncommissioned officers and artisans who helped to hold the army together. What happened to them after the war? Professor Ropp then questioned Sellers' portrayal of the Continental soldier as badly fed and clothed. If this were the case, "why was he so healthy and able to move fast and hit hard when he had to take the field?" As his final comment Ropp wondered, although young boys hardly could be expected to understand such things as the argument against British taxation if that also meant that the Revolution failed to create its own ideology, at least in the army's middle ranks. If there were no ideological context to the Revolution, why did veterans form the Society of the Cincinnati immediately after the war?

The entire discussion period, truncated because of time constraints, focused on the Sellers paper. Several people questioned the size of the sampling, reemphasized the possibility of some patriotic feeling on the part of common soldiers, and asked Dr. Sellers if he had studied the mobility of company grade officers into the field grade ranks. Sellers pointed out that he found the same basic results in an earlier study of a Massachusetts regiment, referred the audience to the high desertion rate during the war, and declared that no field grade officer in his samples ever started as a private—people of high rank usually came from high levels of civilian society.

The Wrap-Up Session

The last session began midway in the afternoon on 11 October with Colonel Alfred F. Hurley, Professor and Head of the Academy History Department, again introducing Professor John Shy of the University of Michigan who acted as the chairman of the session. Professor Shy expressed regret that Professor John R. Alden of Duke University could not be present to chair the session and then introduced the three speakers: Professor Linda Grant DePauw of George Washington University, Squadron Leader John Brett, Royal Air Force exchange officer and a

member of the Air Force Academy's History Department, and Professor Louis Morton of Dartmouth College.

Professor DePauw emphasized the need to study the lower classes and neglected minorities in the Revolutionary generation using evidentiary material that until recently was neglected. In particular she pointed out several important contributions by women to the war effort that deserve closer study: supply, camp maintenance, and medical care. The examination of such subjects, she said, will make the study of the Revolution more interesting to people because it will be more relevant and because it will be truer history.

Squadron Leader Brett reviewed some of the trends in historical scholarship that he sensed were of special concern to American scholars today. In particular he noted that the emphasis being placed on the reasons why Britain could not *win* the war was quite similar to British scholarship on the reasons why the Germans could not win the Battles of Britain and El Alamein in the Second World War. It is possible that Goering and Rommel had something in common with Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne. Brett then referred to the session on strategy and questioned Professor Gruber's conclusion that no war minister or field commander of stature emerged to direct Britain's war effort. One or the other always had emerged in the periods before and after the Revolutionary generation, he said. Perhaps further research might indicate why none appeared in this war. In conclusion he noted that the very problems faced by the Revolutionary commanders and the tactics that they used sound very much like the problems and tactics of today: "guerrilla warfare, counter-insurgency, internal security operations, and unconventional war."

Professor Morton, the last speaker, ranged widely across the entire spectrum of topics covered in the various symposium sessions. Referring to Professor Shy's discussion of the central facts about the Revolution—that the British lost and the Americans won—Morton asked, "Could the British have won the war?" His answer was: not as long as the colonists continued to fight. He chided the speakers in the session on the nature of the war for forgetting that the Revolution was almost any kind of war that one would care to mention, but clever terminology does not explain what the war was all about. In conclusion he pointed out the timelessness of professional jealousy among high ranking officers and the timelessness of the lower-class makeup of the common soldiery from one era to another. Perhaps comparative history, both intergenerational and interdisciplinary, may unlock important insights for future military historians.

After a short discussion period in which members of the audience commented on the various symposium sessions, Colonel Hurley thanked

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the participants, the planning staff and the audience for making the Sixth Military History Symposium such a success.

Stanley J. Underdal, Major, USAF
Deputy for United States History
USAF Academy

The First Session

HARMON MEMORIAL LECTURE

"The American Revolution Today"

OPENING REMARKS

Colonel ALFRED F. HURLEY (USAF Academy): Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, General Allen, I am Colonel Al Hurley, the head of the Air Force Academy's Department of History and the chairman of the committee which presents the symposia in military history. It is a great personal thrill for me to be introducing a symposium in military history here at the Air Force Academy for the sixth time. A significant measure of the passage of the years since we first put on our symposium in May of 1967 is that I will be calling upon our third superintendent in these past 7 years to welcome you this morning. Veterans of these symposia will remember Generals Moorman and Clark, the first superintendents in the period, who went beyond mere protocol considerations and enthusiastically supported every aspect of these symposia to the extent that their other duties permitted. In this regard, General Moorman telephoned his regrets earlier this week that he could not be with us because of a prior commitment in Washington. General Clark is here today. He recently retired from the Air Force and, like General Moorman, plans to live in the Colorado Springs area.

The third superintendent in the history of these symposia, and who will be welcoming you officially today, is Major General James R. Allen. General Allen is a graduate of West Point in the class of 1948. He is a veteran planner and an experienced commander whose top assignments have included command of a Strategic Air Command division, the vital job of chief of staff of that Command, and most recently the job of special assistant for B-1 bomber matters to the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force. In his own way, but like his predecessors, General Allen already has made vividly clear to me his concern that we perpetuate the excellence which has marked these symposia. In short, it is because of such tremendous support that I am especially happy this morning to be able to introduce to you our new Superintendent, Major General James R. Allen.

Major General JAMES R. ALLEN (Superintendent, USAF Academy): Thank you, Al. I think that I met many of you last night. Let me welcome all of you to the Academy and to the Sixth Air Force Academy Military History Symposium. I would like to extend a very special welcome to my predecessor, General Bub Clark, and to General Robert McDermott [in the audience], who did so much for the Academy in its earlier days. As Colonel Hurley pointed out, this series began in 1967 and since that time the goals of the symposium have remained relatively constant. They are threefold: first, to provide some degree of original research in the field of

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military affairs; second, to make a tangible contribution in the national interest to military history through the publication of the proceedings of the symposium; third, and certainly very important in my mind, to encourage our cadets and future graduates in the further study of military history because I, for one, am convinced that a deep appreciation of military history is essential to a successful commander on the battlefield.

As you all are aware, we encourage civilian participation in our educational programs here at the Air Force Academy. We have guest lecturers in various classes, we have speakers in the Cadet Forum and in the Distinguished Speakers Program, and we have the Academy Assembly where students from other colleges and universities throughout the country meet with the cadets to discuss a topic of national interest. And we are especially honored, I think, that this symposium and its objectives are pursued through the joint contribution of distinguished civilian and military historians.

This year's topic, of course, is both appropriate and timely, as we approach the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. I might say that we have received a little bit of needling from some of our sister Academies, but Colonel Hurley has emphasized to me that our purpose here is not to have a symposium on the role of air power in the American Revolution. As a matter of fact, exactly 200 years ago to the day this great nation of ours was making its first hesitant steps, if you will, toward its independence. At Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, the First Continental Congress was considering specific terms for the proposed Declaration of Rights and Grievances, and on October 10, 1774, John Adams confided in his diary, and I quote: "The deliberations of the Congress are spun out to an unnecessary length. There is so much wit, sense, learning, acuteness, subtlety, eloquence among fifty gentlemen . . . that an immensity of time is spent unnecessarily." I commend to you, ladies and gentlemen, the same wit, sense, learning, acuteness, subtlety, and eloquence, but I trust that the activities of the next 2 days will not result in time spun out unnecessarily. In closing, let me wish you a very successful and productive symposium. We are delighted to have you here and we hope that you will come back again. Thank you very much.

HURLEY: Thank you, General Allen. A key feature at each symposium has been the presentation of a Harmon Memorial Lecture. These lectures were known worldwide before we even began these symposia. When we planned the first lecture in 1958-59 during the period when General McDermott was our Dean, and General McDermott at the outset played a key role in getting the series under way, we also considered the idea of a conference organized along the lines of the present symposia. The time was not ripe, however, so it was not until 1965 and 1966 that a departmental

committee chaired by Lieutenant Colonel Victor D. Sutch sold the idea of the present symposium series to Generals McDermott and Moorman.

The first lecture in the Harmon series was presented here in the spring of 1959 by Professor W. Frank Craven of Princeton on the topic "Why Military History?" In a sense, all the subsequent lectures have helped answer the question posed by Frank Craven. Frank made excellent use in his lecture of Walter Millis's observation in his provocative book, *Arms and Men*, that the nuclear age had invalidated all past experience and all the lessons of history that we could find in the study of military history. Quite neatly, Frank turned the argument back on Mr. Millis by noting that Millis's own superb book was the best answer to his disclaimer about the value of military history. All the lecturers since Craven's time, through the pertinence of the questions that they have asked of their subject matter, have provided continuing evidence of the value of military history.

Today's Harmon lecturer has the credentials to provide another answer to the question first posed by Professor Craven. Our lecturer is Professor John Shy, a graduate of the United States Military Academy who, following army service, principally in the Far East, entered graduate training in history at the University of Vermont and then took his PhD at Princeton. He taught at Princeton and eventually became a full professor at the University of Michigan. This year he is on leave from Michigan to be the Visiting Professor of Military History at the Army War College. Professor Shy's publications include the prize-winning book, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution*. In 1971 he authored one of the most provocative pieces that I have encountered in my own study of military history, an article entitled, "The American Military Experience, History and Learning." I suspect that all of us in the audience who teach military history at the advanced level have made fine use of that article.

So, ladies and gentlemen, it is a privilege to present to you this morning our keynote speaker, and the seventeenth Harmon Memorial Lecturer, Professor John Shy.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION TODAY

John Shy
University of Michigan

"The American Revolution Today," as a title, must sound vaguely familiar. Surely we have read or heard this one before, somewhere, in the Sunday magazine section or on television. If the title seems banal, that was the intention, because it seemed more appropriate here not to strive for profundity or esoteric reinterpretation of the American Revolution as an armed struggle, but to deal directly with certain aspects of the Revolutionary War so obvious and so elementary that they are easily overlooked. The first, perhaps most important, aspect has to do with the relationship between a war fought 200 years ago and now.

"Relevance" was never a strong word. Vague, and a little soft at the center, it simply could not carry the load placed upon it during the 1960s, when a silent, accepting generation gave way to one that was vocal and full of doubt. And now the word is exhausted. Sophisticated people visibly react, wincing or smirking, when others use the word, as if the speaker were wearing an odd piece of clothing gone out of style. We (at least we in history departments, who have suffered during the last decade a hemorrhage of students to more obviously relevant disciplines like psychology and sociology) relish signs of a counterattack that will administer the coup de grace to "relevance," as in a sign tacked on a history office door: "The surest way not to find relevance," it said, "is to go looking for it." With a sigh of relief, teachers of history watch enrollment figures bottom out, then begin to climb again, and they go back to teaching history, not trying to explain why history is worth studying.

And yet, that weak word, muttered and shouted by a generation of students already moving toward middle age, a generation that may never have thought carefully about what it was demanding when it demanded "relevance," that word makes a vital point. There ought to be a better, stronger, clearer word, but there is none, so "relevance" has had to do what it could to make that vital point. The point is: historians inhabit two worlds, the world of the present, and the world of the past.¹ And it is not

¹ Among the many historians and philosophers of history who have discussed this point, the most stimulating and instructive are the early statements by Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review*, XXXVII (1932), 221-232; the extreme statement that "relevance" not only *does* but *ought* to dictate by Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York, 1963); and the iconoclastic second thoughts of J. H. Hexter, particularly "The Historian's Day," in his *Reappraisals in History* (Evanston, Ill., 1962), and "The Historian and His Society: A Sociological Inquiry—Perhaps," in his *Doing History* (Bloomington, Ind., 1971).

just any "past" world, but some particular location in time and space which each historian probably knows as well or better than he knows the world of the present. Most historians read the documents of the past more systematically and carefully than they read today's newspaper. They reconstruct the physical environment of the past with painstaking care, while usually taking their own almost for granted, often hardly noticing their immediate surroundings. The vital point, so feebly made by the cry for "relevance," is that these past and present worlds not only *ought* to connect, but they absolutely *do* connect, whether we like it, or are aware of it, or not. There is simply no escaping the subjective quality of historical study; "history" is memory, and the human mind is the inevitable filter through which every gritty historical fact either does, or does not, pass. We may smile wisely at those who still demand relevance; but then we go back to work, our present world subtly dictating the past time and place we choose for intensive study, dictating our priorities for research, dictating our preliminary hypotheses and our angle of attack, dictating when we can meet to talk about history, who our audience will be, and even suggesting what that audience would like to hear.

Consider, briefly, how the historical "present" has affected study and understanding of the Revolutionary past. Historians who lived through the great Civil War focused on the Constitution, that miraculous and delicate achievement which had bound together disparate, scattered groups of people; for these historians of the nineteenth century, the Revolution was primarily the story of the long road to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, and the question lurking in the backs of their minds was how the Constitution could contain the forces of disruption which threatened the Republic in the 1860s and 1870s. For a later generation of historians, those who lived and worked through an era of great reform and great depression, of Woodrow Wilson and the two Roosevelts, the concerns were different. In both the causes and the consequences of the Revolution, they looked for the effects of class conflict and economic interest, and of course they found them. For a still later generation, profoundly affected by the Second World War and working under the influence of the Cold War, the chief concern seems again very different: it was with the essential unity and goodness of eighteenth-century American society, not contrived at Philadelphia in 1787 so much as sprung from the equality and security of life, and from the basic soundness of belief, in colonial and Revolutionary America, giving the nation the strength and purpose—then and now—needed both to defend itself and to lead the world by example. Needless to say, the most recent generation of historians has begun to raise questions about this view, less by direct refutation than by exploration of some of the disturbing sides of life in eighteenth-century America—slavery, poverty, violence, Indian relations,

and the place of women, to mention a few.²

But our focus is not the Revolution as a whole, but the role played by armed force in the Revolution. More than a decade ago there was noted a revival of interest in the military side of the Revolution.³ Between the Civil War and the Second World War historians had moved away from the study of military history. Many, reacting to the horrors of the First World War, simply found war a repulsive subject (which of course it is), and others thought (not unreasonably) that for too long excessive attention to military history had caused other important aspects of the past to be neglected. But with the Second World War and the Cold War came another shift.⁴ War again seemed interesting, and its study respectable. By looking at a few examples of the forms taken by this revived interest in military history, we can see again how the mid-twentieth-century "present" and the Revolutionary "past" have interacted.

Piers Mackesy of Oxford gave us a radically new perspective on the Revolutionary War by putting it into a global context, and by making us see it from London; King George III and his cabinet could not match the British performance of 1939-1945, but it is hard to imagine Mackesy's book without the Second World War to serve as a concealed analytical framework.⁵ My own study of the British Army in America before the Revolution, and what some reviewers thought excessive preoccupation with the confusion and contradictions in British military policy for America before 1775, was at least partly a product of what seemed the appalling confusion of American military policy under Eisenhower, the dreary interservice wrangling, and contemporary failure to think through basic assumptions about the use of force.⁶ Ira Gruber of Rice, in his study of the unfortunate Howe brothers, focused on the actual use of force; and if I do not misunderstand him, he has been fascinated by the effort to make war an extension of politics in the formulation of Clausewitz, whose reputation as a military thinker rose in the course of the great strategic debate of the later 1950s and early 1960s (when Professor Gruber was

² An excellent brief survey of historical writing on the Revolution is by Wesley Frank Craven, "The Revolutionary Era," in *The Reconstruction of American History*, edited by John Higham (New York, 1963); longer and more recent is the introduction by Jack Greene to his *Reinterpretation of the American Revolution* (New York, 1967); one view of the younger generation is expressed by Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, edited by Barton J. Bernstein (New York, 1968).

³ Don Higginbotham, "American Historians and the Military History of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review*, LXX (1964), 18-34.

⁴ Wesley Frank Craven, *Why Military History?* (U.S. Air Force Academy, 1959).

⁵ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964).

⁶ John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton, 1965).

doing his work) over how, after Korea, the United States could best make war an effective political instrument.⁷ Whether his study of the Howes contains any lesson for our times, or whether the author ever thought about Clausewitz, Flexible Response, and all that, only Professor Gruber can say.

Don Higginbotham of North Carolina is a last example. Daniel Morgan, the subject of his first book, was not exactly a guerrilla, but he certainly was irregular in many respects, and he was the kind of effective and charismatic soldier who turns up in the revolutionary wars of our own time.⁸ Vietnam, especially, created an interest in seeing the American Revolution as a truly revolutionary war, with guerilla tactics, popular attitudes, and even counterinsurgent methods getting new attention. Higginbotham's next book, a general history of the war, gave full scope to these "revolutionary" elements in the military conflict, but he also pointed to a still more recent trend—toward interest in the deeper effects of the war on American society. More than any previous military historian, Higginbotham began to ask particularly about what mobilization of manpower and ruinous inflation did to people, how the Revolutionary War as a protracted, strenuous public event affected thousands and thousands of private lives. Somehow, as I compare the air fare to Colorado Springs this year with what it was in 1969, when I last attended the symposium, or watch my own personal response to the televised ordeal of Watergate, I find those few pages in which Higginbotham discusses wartime psychology and the effects of runaway inflation highly relevant.⁹ It seems strange that military historians have waited so long to study war, not merely as a series of maneuvers and battles, but as a kind of revolution in its own right.

Now it is important to be as clear as possible about how the historian's own present world impinges on his understanding of the past. The present has a powerful effect on what seems most relevant, but it does not dictate conclusions, although it may nudge those conclusions in a certain direction. Mackesy thought that Britain might have won the war had it persevered a year or so longer. Gruber thought the Howes virtually lost the war because they let their political role fatally compromise their military performance. Other historians, equally fascinated by the global nature of the conflict and by the interplay of politics and strategy, would

⁷ Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York, 1972). On the new appreciation of Clausewitz, see for example, Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, 1959).

⁸ Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1961).

⁹ Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (New York, 1971).

disagree strenuously. The danger that historians will tell lies about the past in order to serve present political or ideological ends is less than the risk that, by responding to the lure of relevance, we will distort the past by being one-sided. To have many students of British strategy and military policy, but too few of the grass-roots American response to wartime pressures, will produce a lopsided understanding of the Revolutionary War. But that kind of risk is not peculiar to the study of history and the perils posed by a quest for historical relevance; it goes with simply being alive and trying to understand anything.

What then is the right approach to the American Revolutionary War today? My audience is mainly military, brought together primarily by a felt need to do something about the two-hundredth anniversary of the Revolution. Military professionals hope, like militant students, to learn something relevant. Over us all looms the Bicentennial, so far an embarrassing mess, in part because, so far, too few have had the heart or displayed the imagination required to celebrate it properly. Our lack of heart, and our paucity of imagination, are themselves symptoms of a "present" that seems all the more disheartening when we look at the evidence of energy and brilliance 200 years ago. And so, speaking directly to soldiers, who seek guidance, and impelled but disconcerted by the Bicentennial occasion and its doomed desire for profundity, what is there to say about the Revolutionary War? Or is there anything to say?

We can begin to find an answer if we let ourselves be guided by the pressures of relevance. The military, like all other professions outside of the academic world, seeks knowledge not for its own sake, but for its professional uses. Humbly consulting experts, soldiers try to pick out the professionally useful in whatever the experts convey. Are there lessons, or other useful knowledge, for the American military professional in the story of the Revolution? It is a fair question, better brought into the open than suppressed by academic impatience with utilitarian concerns.

The other side of "today"—the Bicentennial—does not point so clearly. But let me try to define the problem: it is mainly in the sense of remoteness that we feel from the Revolution. It is not only a problem of distance in time. For many people today, the Civil War has an immediacy, a palpability, that the Revolution lacks, however much we may admire George Washington, Monticello, or early American furniture. Lincoln lives, but Washington is a monument. The heart of the matter is in the very success of the Revolution. The Civil War, like every other major event in American history, including (we now begin to see) the Second World War, has a tragic, human, two-sided quality that the Revolution seems to lack. Whatever was done or decided in 1775 or 1777 or 1781, the outcome justified it, and the whole complex of events takes on a smooth,

self-contained character that makes getting the right emotional grip on the subject very difficult. The American nation was a success story from the beginning; the nation began with the Revolution; *quod erat demonstrandum*. In short, finding something useful to the military profession, and breaking down the barrier posed by time and success, is the task imposed on me by "today." Let us start with the most basic facts, and try to work our way toward some useful and satisfying result.

The first fact about the Revolutionary War is that the British lost it. And the inevitable question follows, for soldier as well as historian, why? It is easy to assemble a whole catalogue of answers: military failure to adjust to American conditions; blunders by the field commanders; incompetence and corruption in London; stubborn and obtuse misunderstanding of American grievances by both Crown and Parliament; and collapse of British public support for the war after Yorktown. But a second look at each of these answers raises a new set of questions.

From early on, the British and their German and American allies seem as adept at irregular warfare, at the tactics of hit and run, as do the rebels. For every tactical blunder like Bennington there is a comparable rebel blunder. British tactics might have been better, sooner, but it is hard to put much weight on the tactical factor.¹⁰ The quality of high command in America is another matter. From the faulty planning of the march to Concord in 1775, through the Yorktown fiasco in 1781, British field commanders made serious mistakes. More than anything, they repeatedly misjudged the American military and popular response. In retrospect, it is easy to say what they should or might have done. But as I look at the men and their decisions, several things occur to me: one is that none of these men—Gage, Howe, Clinton, Carleton, Cornwallis, even Burgoyne—was notably incompetent.¹¹ Their military accomplishments justified giving each of them high military command. Second, a few mistakes—like the failure to seal off the southeastern exit from Trenton on 2 January 1777—are the kinds of lapses that inevitably occur in every war, that every commander in history has been guilty of committing or permitting. Third, the other mistakes—like not destroying Washington's army in the autumn of 1776, like expecting to reach Albany from Canada without too much trouble in the summer of 1777, like expecting to reestablish a sea line of communication from the Virginia tidewater in 1781—seem reasonably

¹⁰ The best picture of the "little war" of constant skirmishing, raid, and ambush is in the journal of Carl Leopold von Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, translated and edited by Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (New Brunswick, N.J., 1957).

¹¹ On British military and naval leadership, see George A. Billias (editor), *George Washington's Opponents* (New York, 1969).

calculated risks, which of course in the event were *miscalculated*. That historians can still argue vigorously about these decisions suggests that the commanders themselves, however hapless they may have been, were at least not stupid or grossly incompetent. For example: Professor Gruber thinks Howe should have pursued Washington to destruction after the battle of Long Island in 1776.¹² Hindsight strongly suggests that Gruber is right. But the length of the British casualty list at Bunker Hill, plus Howe's belief that the beaten American army would probably fall apart and his fear that pointless killing of the King's American subjects might have a boomerang effect, led him to play a cat-and-mouse game during those months after Long Island. It was a mistake, probably, but not a foolish or irresponsible one. We may hold high military commanders to an unrealistic, Napoleonic standard; when they fail to meet the standard, we may judge them too quickly as incompetents. British commanders, as a group, were not unusually bad, and I think it is a mistake to tie the can of British defeat to their tails.¹³

As for the situation in Britain itself, Lord George Germain and the Earl of Sandwich may have been unattractive people, but the sheer size of the unprecedented British financial, administrative, and logistical effort which Germain and Sandwich, as the responsible cabinet ministers for army and navy, mobilized and directed suggests that corruption and confusion in London is at most a marginal part of our explanation for failure.¹⁴ Likewise, the crucial collapse of British public opinion after Yorktown needs to be seen against fairly solid popular support for the war at the outset, even among many who had been critical of British policy in America before 1775, and a miraculous revival of that solidarity when it was threatened in the aftermath of Burgoyne's defeat by French entry into the war, by the danger of a cross-Channel attack, and by an almost revolutionary economic and political crisis in the home islands themselves.¹⁵ Finally, whether greater political flexibility in the cabinet and House of Commons, more generous and timely concessions to American demands, might have split and dissipated the revolutionary movement, is a fascinating but impossible question to answer. Certainly American leaders were afraid of just such an event. The timing of the

¹² Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 112-126.

¹³ In addition to the works already mentioned, William B. Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York, 1964), and Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston, 1970), are important.

¹⁴ Mackesy, *War for America*. A forthcoming book by A. R. Bowler probes the question of corruption and British strategy more fully than any previous study.

¹⁵ Herbert Butterfield, *George III, Lord North, and the People, 1779-80* (London, 1949).

Declaration of Independence was, in part, a Congressional coup intended to foreclose serious negotiations which the British seemed ready to undertake.¹⁶ But the basic British line on negotiation was that previous flexibility had been repeatedly misread by Americans as weakness and irresolution, and that only major concessions, extracted by the pressure of armed force from the Americans themselves, could mean the start of a negotiated peace. This was a wrong-headed position, perhaps, but one which we, of all people, ought to be able to recognize as not completely unreasonable.

Should we conclude then that the root cause of British defeat was not so much in the failure of British leaders or British people, but in the circumstances of the war? That Britain's objective was simply not attainable without great good luck or divine intervention? That there was a radical dysfunction between British ends and British means? That they were trapped in a set of basic assumptions about their problem that made the American Revolutionary War a British Tragedy?

"Tragedy" is a word with a seductive ring to it, especially when the tragedy happened to someone else, long ago. But if we stay close to the facts, we find some knowledgeable, relatively detached observers on the spot who did not see the British problem in tragic terms. They thought the British had a good chance to win, and they believed the margin between winning and losing lay well within the available range of military power and strategic perception. To take only one example: Colonel Louis Duportail was one of the ablest French officers to serve the American cause. He became chief engineer, and rose to the rank of major general in the Continental Army. He was also a spy for the French Minister. In a long, brutally candid letter written after Burgoyne's surrender and on the eve of Valley Forge, a letter that never reached its destination because the British intercepted it, Duportail stated that the British could win if they replaced General Howe, which they did, and if they could maintain an army in America of 30,000 men, a figure actually surpassed in 1776 and not maintained subsequently because forces were dispersed.¹⁷

¹⁶ Evidence that the timing of the Declaration of Independence was in part intended to block negotiations with the British is in Weldon A. Brown, *Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1785* (Baton Rouge, 1941), 90-107. See also George Washington to John Augustine Washington, Philadelphia, 31 May 1776, *The Writings of George Washington*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, vol. V (Washington, 1932), 91-92.

¹⁷ A copy of the letter from Duportail to the Minister of War, the Comte de Saint-Germain, dated at the Whitemarsh camp, 12 November 1777, is in the papers of Sir Henry Clinton in the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. A summary of the letter is in the papers of the Earl of Shelburne, then in political opposition, also in the Clements Library. A published translation by Arthur P. Watts, based on another copy in the British

Duportail based his estimate on weaknesses in the American situation, to which I will turn in a moment. Deciding whether Duportail and some others who agreed with him were exactly right is less important than seeing that such opinions existed. Major American defeats in Canada in 1775, around New York City in 1776, on the Brandywine in 1777, at Charleston and Camden in South Carolina in 1780, as well as the collapse of the American position in New Jersey in 1776, later in large areas of the South, and still later in the trans-Appalachian West, suggest that we must take Duportail seriously. The British lost, but they were fighting within that zone of contingencies where both winning and losing are not unlikely outcomes.

And what of the American Revolutionaries? The second most obvious fact about the Revolutionary War seems to be that the rebels won. But a safer, more accurate statement is that they did not lose. If we look closely at the American side of the war, we see a very mixed picture—impressive in some ways, but very unedifying in others. From the outburst of enthusiasm in the spring of 1775, genuine support for the war appears to have declined through the next 6 years. The service and pension files in the National Archives indicate that a large proportion of the white male population, and a significant part of the black male population as well, performed active military service, but only a tiny part of the population performed truly extended military service.¹⁸ People seemed to get tired. They got tired of serving, and they got tired of contributing. Of course, they got angry when British, or Hessian or Tory troops misbehaved, but they also grew weary of being bullied by local committees of safety, by corrupt deputy assistant commissaries of supply, and by bands of ragged strangers with guns in their hands calling themselves soldiers of the Revolution. They got very tired of worthless and counterfeit money. Duportail, for one, also thought Americans were soft. He said that supply shortages were wrecking the Revolution, not shortages of

Public Record Office, is in *Pennsylvania History*, I (1934), 101–106. The summary in the Shelburne papers indicates that the letter was intercepted in the English Channel, which Duportail himself guessed (see Elizabeth S. Kite, *Brigadier-General Louis Lebeque Duportail* [Baltimore, 1933], 59). Duportail was Minister of War early in the French Revolution, later fled to the United States, and died in 1802 on his way to join Napoleon.

¹⁸ In fact, pension files exaggerate the amount of longer service because the pension law of 1818 required a minimum of 9 months service with Continental forces, and the law of 1832 required a minimum of 6 months with the militia. The large number who served even less than these minimum periods is apparent only in a haphazard local studies, like that by Howard K. Sanders, *[Mass.] in the Revolution*. 2 vols. (Boston, 1909).

munitions, but of things like linen, sugar, tea, and liquor. They were not, he said, a warlike people, but were used to living comfortably without working too hard. Of course, the European peasant was his standard of comparison, but those peasants—the poorest, most miserable and desperate, toughest ones—comprised the backbone of every European army. Duportail, himself committed fully to the American side, told the French government, "There is a hundred times more enthusiasm for this Revolution in any Paris cafe than in all the colonies together." Surely he exaggerated, but too much other evidence supports the line of his argument to reject it out of hand.¹⁹

This realm of simple and obvious facts in which we have been operating is slippery. American Revolutionaries did not *win* the war, but they did not lose it. What do these words mean, and what is the point of the distinction? Clearly, that they mustered enough strength from internal and foreign sources of support not to be defeated decisively, and that they hung on long enough to discourage the British government and people. Though not beaten as the Confederacy in 1865 and Germany in 1945 were beaten, neither did they win militarily as the Union won and the Allies won. The point of the distinction has to do with the character of the struggle, which went on for more than 7 years. In characterizing the war from the Revolutionary viewpoint, what stands out is weakness, part of which Duportail noted, the rest of which was not yet apparent to him.

In discussing American Revolutionary weakness, we must be careful. There is danger of distortion and exaggeration. Obviously, the rebels could have been much weaker than they were. Moreover, military historians are too apt to look for someone to blame. As we asked about the British, so we ask about American revolutionaries: were the generals incompetent, Congress irresponsible, the States selfish, and the people apathetic? These may be the wrong questions, leading us to irrelevant answers. If politicians squabbled endlessly, if commanders repeatedly committed elementary military mistakes, if States ignored Congress while the Army damned it, if ordinary people quit and went home, or hid their cows or even packed up and went to Vermont or across the mountains to get away from the war and its ceaseless demands—and all these things did in fact happen frequently in the later years of the war—then it is beside the point to blame the politicians, the soldiers, or the people. One wonders why the whole affair did not simply collapse, and what kept it going so long.

¹⁹ See, for example, the entries from 1779 onward in *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall*, edited by William J. Duane (Albany, 1877).

Some good American patriots at the time wondered the same thing. Did war take on a life of its own, like the Thirty Years War as portrayed in Berchtold Brecht's "Mother Courage," with people virtually forgetting what it was about, and trying to do no more than survive, even if survival meant collaborating with the impersonal machinery of mobilization? That is not the way we like to think about the origins of the American nation, but there is evidence to support such a view (though the Revolution never attained the far-flung ferocity of that most brutal and protracted of the religious wars). The years from 1776 to 1782 might indeed be recounted as horror stories of terrorism, rapacity, mendacity, and cowardice, not to blame our ancestors for these things, but to remind us what a war fought by the weak must look like. The bed-rock facts of the American Revolutionary struggle, especially after the euphoric first year, are not pretty.

But everything turned out all right. The British went home, even the French went home; thousands of German prisoners of war blended into the Pennsylvania landscape, and only the Spanish, the Indians, and black slaves were left to deal as best they could with the victorious Revolutionaries. How a national polity so successful, and a society so relatively peaceful, could emerge from a war so full of bad behavior, including perhaps a fifth of the population actively treasonous (that is, loyal to Crown), must be a puzzle.¹⁰

Duportail, like many other observers on all sides, thought that the United States would split into fragments once the war was over. The Hessian Colonel Dincklage was even more pessimistic as he looked into the future:

They may have peace but not happiness when the war is over. It matters little whether the Americans win or lose. Presently this country is the scene of the most cruel events. Neighbors are on opposite sides, children are against their fathers. Anyone who differs with the opinions of Congress in thought or in speech is regarded as an enemy and turned over to the hangmen, or else he must flee.

We give these refugees food and support most of them with arms. They go on patrol for us in small groups and . . . into their home districts to take revenge by pillaging, murdering, and burning.

If peace comes after an English victory, discord between the two

¹⁰ The best estimate of numbers of Loyalists is Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, XXI (1968), 259-277.

parties will flare up underneath the ashes and nobody will be able to resolve it. If the rebels should win, they will break their necks, one by one. What misery the people have plunged themselves into.²¹

Dincklage, like Duportail, was too pessimistic and his prediction was wrong. Yet even the most prominent leaders of the Revolution had similar fears.

A brilliant young staff officer, Alexander Hamilton, after several years of watching the course of the war from Washington's headquarters, confided to his closest friend:

... our countrymen have all the folly of the ass and all the passiveness of the sheep in their compositions. They are determined not to be free and they can neither be frightened, discouraged nor persuaded to change their resolution. If we are saved, France and Spain must save us. I have the most pigmy-feelings at the idea, and I almost wish to hide my disgrace in universal ruin.²²

Thomas Jefferson, who saw most of the war from Philadelphia and Virginia, and whose optimism allegedly contrasts with Hamilton's cold-eyed conservatism, occasionally revealed similar fears, especially once the unifying British threat had passed:

I know no danger so dreadful and so probable as that of internal contests. . . . The states will go to war with each other in defiance of Congress; one will call in France to her assistance; another Gr. Britain, and so we shall have all the wars of Europe brought to our own doors.

Jefferson predicted that "From the conclusion of this war we shall be going down hill."²³ Having faced apathy, riot, and even secessionism as governor of Virginia when he had tried to mobilize the State against British invasion in 1781, Jefferson had reason to worry about the postwar prospects of the United States.²⁴ Jefferson, at his gloomiest, sounded not unlike Dincklage and Duportail.

²¹ Undated letter quoted in Ernst Kipping, *The Hessian View of America, 1776-1783*, translated by B. A. Uhlendorf (Monmouth Beach, N.J., 1971), 34-35.

²² To John Laurens, [Ramapo, N.J.], 30 June 1780, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, edited by Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, vol. II (New York, 1961), 347-348.

²³ To Edmund Randolph, Baltimore, 15 February 1783, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Julian P. Boyd, vol. VI (Princeton, 1952), 248. The prediction about "going down hill" appears in his *Notes On the State of Virginia*, edited by William Peden (New York, 1972), 161. The *Notes* were written in 1781.

²⁴ *Jefferson Papers*, V, 455, 513, 566, 583-584, 593, 622, *et passim*.

Why were they all wrong? When Shays's Rebellion broke out in 1786, and again when the Whiskey Rebellion erupted in 1794, many thought that the beginning of the end had come. As predicted, the unwieldy, centrifugal Republic, like Poland, was collapsing into anarchy. Even Hamilton and Jefferson, as emergent party leaders in the 1790s, were acting out the scenario both had written: sectional conflict and violent rhetoric followed by apparent appeals for foreign intervention and cries of treason. But it did not happen. Affluence—what Duportail disparaged as the soft life—is part of the explanation; no matter how aggrieved or deprived, no one was likely to starve in America, so insurrection seemed to lack the desperate edge that it could have in England, Ireland, or France.²⁵ But more than mere affluence explains post-Revolutionary success.

Part, perhaps the most important part, of the explanation lies in the character of the war itself, and in contemporary perceptions of the armed struggle. Bitter experience of fighting from weakness had all but obliterated the naive optimism of 1775, and had sensitized Americans to their own political peril. Fearful prophecies, based on dismal fact, functioned to defeat those prophecies by channeling political energies into the struggle against anarchy. Leaders thought, talked, and even compromised, shrinking from the last act of the scenario that they knew so well; people listened, talked back, occasionally resisted, but ultimately acquiesced, at least for the crucial season when the future of the Republic hung in the balance.

Nothing was feared more by leaders in the postwar era than disunion, and most people felt the same way. Disunion meant failure and disgrace, so widely predicted and expected, and the fear itself generated extraordinary efforts to prevent it. All had learned the lessons of a dirty revolutionary war that had ended, not with Napoleonic victories or massive defections from the enemy armies, but with ragged unpaid American soldiers drifting down the Hudson valley to sign on as sailors in the ships which were evacuating British forces, while American officers back at Newburgh half-heartedly planned a coup d'etat to get the money owed them by Congress.²⁶ The Revolution, as an armed struggle, ended with a whimper.

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, 1963), stresses the absence of a "social question" in the American Revolution.

²⁶ Lt. Benjamin Gilbert to his father, New Windsor, N.Y. [June or July], 1783, Benjamin Gilbert letterbook, Clements Library. On the Newburgh officers' "coup," there is Richard H. Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d'Etat," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, XXVII (1970), 187-220; Paul David Nelson, "Horatio Gates at Newburgh, 1783: A Misunderstood Role," with a rebuttal by Richard H. Kohn, *ibid.*, XXIX (1972), 143-158; and C. Edward Skeen, "The Newburgh Conspiracy Reconsidered," with a rebuttal by Richard H. Kohn, *ibid.*, XXXI (1974), 275-298.

Where in all this are the lessons for the soldier, and the Bicentennial message? For the Bicentennial there is only a greater sense of reality, of immediacy, of (I hope) honesty in looking at the Revolutionary War as it actually was. In a way, the Bicentennial itself, and our anxiety about it, are a continuation of the national myth which began in the 1780s, when the elation of ultimate victory combined with the sour memories of widespread human weakness and depravity as revealed in the 7-year struggle, to produce a wonderfully creative period in American politics. The ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Paris before myth and reality about the Revolutionary War were becoming entwined. The Bicentennial is indeed a birthday, and we all know the strange emotional effects induced by birthday parties. Being born the way we were was glorious. We think. Or was it? Or is it? Much about the event called the Revolutionary War had been very painful and was unpleasant to remember; only the outcome was unqualifiedly pleasant; so memory, as ever, began to play tricks with the event, which is not always a bad thing, though it makes the historian's task difficult.

And the lessons for soldiers? The most important lesson may be more philosophical than practical. Soldiers, like other professionals, learn to see themselves as the center of the activity which defines their professionalism. But the use of force is a weird activity. What most impresses me about the War of the Revolution is the sort of thing that professional military education does not dwell on, because it does not seem very practical and even sounds vaguely defeatist. It moves the commander from stage center into the chorus, if not, like Tolstoy's Kutuzov, into the orchestra or the audience. It reminds all of us, civilians as well as soldiers, of the deeply relativistic and contingent nature of violent encounters. Killing is a terribly easy thing to measure, and the results of killing called "victory" and "defeat" seem almost equally unequivocal. The British lost, so the Americans won. But when we stop fixating on military failure and success, and start scrutinizing that dynamic, unstable process of collectively trying to kill and not get killed which George Patton labeled war, then the commander and his intentions and decisions become no more than one in a set of complexly interacting elements.²⁷ Because it may be an extreme case, the Revolution drives home the lesson that in war reality always seems to escape perception, results outrun intentions, and the final outcome is much more than the sum total of decisions made at headquarters. It may be a bleak sort of lesson for the professional soldier, but realism is better than illusion, and the lesson, if properly regarded, carries a certain cold comfort.

²⁷ This definition of war is in Major George S. Patton, Jr.'s unpublished thesis of 1932 in the Army War College archives, acc. no. 387-52, p.46. The full passage is, "The guiding principle of [military] organization should be the endeavor to devise means of killing without getting killed."

HURLEY: Thank you, John. You are doing what a key-noter is supposed to do: getting us off on the right foot and proposing so well the issues that we are going to address in this symposium. Also I want to thank you as a Harmon lecturer for providing another excellent answer to Frank Craven's question, "Why military history?" Since Frank was one of your mentors as well as one of mine, I think that I am on safe ground in saying that he will be most pleased when he reads your answer to his question.

Now we must turn to some administration. I guess that glitches are endemic in running affairs such as this one, but with the gracious help of some fine people in my department and among you visiting historians, we were able to adjust to the glitches. First of all, Professor John Alden, who was scheduled to be on the program, sent me a telegram Tuesday saying that he was ill with the flu and would have to bow out. However, Professor George Billias was kind enough to volunteer to take on the job of being chairman of this afternoon's session in addition to providing the comment. I have relied on an old friendship with John Shy to persuade him to serve as the chairman of the wrap up panel in tomorrow afternoon's session in place of Professor Alden.

Second, Professor Esmond Wright sent me a letter at the end of last week to say that the general election was being held in England today and he had decided to stand for Parliament. Perhaps some of you who know him will remember that he had been a member of Parliament until 1960. He decided to run again, and we should hear the results of the election by this evening. We wish him well but, unfortunately, this meant that he could not join us for the symposium. However, Squadron Leader John Brett, a new member of my department as our Royal Air Force exchange officer, has kindly consented to provide the very necessary English accent that we should have in the wrap up session tomorrow. John is going to draw on the fine training that he received in history at Cambridge and on the work that he has been doing ever since in the education field.

The Second Session
STRATEGY REVISITED

OPENING REMARKS

Lieutenant Colonel PHILIP D. CAINE (USAF Academy): Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to the second session of the Sixth Military Symposium in which we will be concerned with strategy revisited. It has been said that the best laid plans of mice and men go astray, and we are not an exception to that. Professor John Alden, who was scheduled to chair this session, caught the flu and will not be with us. Professor George Billias, the commentator on this session, has graciously offered to do the honors both as chairman and as commentator. Professor Billias is a native of the east coast, being born in Lynn, Massachusetts. He served during the Second World War in the Army Medical Corps, and after the war got his master's and PhD from Columbia University. After the completion of his PhD, he served for a time in the National Defense Historian Branch of the United States Air Force and then accepted a professorship at the University of Maine. In 1962 he went to Clark University where he teaches at present. He is author, editor and/or contributor to many books, of which I shall mention only a few. He is the editor of *George Washington's Generals*, editor and contributor to *The American Revolution: How Revolutionary Was It?*, editor and contributor with Gerald Grob to a book that has certainly been helpful to me over the course of time, *Interpretations of American History*, and editor and contributor to both *George Washington's Opponents* and *Perspectives in Early American History*. He also is the editor of the monumental American Revolutionary series, *The Three Sides of the American Revolution*. Ladies and gentlemen, Professor George Billias.

GEORGE BILLIAS (Clark University): Thank you, Colonel Caine. It is a pleasure to be back here in Colorado Springs. I was first here in 1951 when I helped to open the historical office of the Air Defense Command with Tom Sturm, who is still with the Air Force program and who is in the audience, and Denys Volan, another old friend who recently retired from this program. At the time that I was out here, the Academy was just a gleam in some architect's eye and I can assure you I am just amazed to see what has taken place at this mesa.

Before we start, I would like to say a word about John Alden. I am really sorry that he could not be here. I do not mind wearing the two hats, but he is on the eve of retirement and is one of our distinguished Revolutionary War scholars. It would have been nice to have seen him here at this point, and it would also have been most appropriate because, as some of you are aware, Professor Gruber has worked with him, as has Professor Higginbotham; so his former students dominate much of this

panel. In that sense he would have been a much more fit chairman than I am.

The subject of eighteenth-century strategy, with which this panel is concerned, was probably in process of change during the Revolutionary War. Before we can understand the changes involved, it is necessary to know how conventional warfare was waged in the old regime. To understand that change we have much to unlearn. Too many American military historians have read Clausewitz back into the Revolutionary War, and they tend to view strategy as a number of Clausewitzian principles. They try to classify neatly every action by an American or a British general as an observance of this principle or a violation of that one.

To get back to the way war usually was waged before the American Revolution we must realize that it was quite different from what it was after the campaigns of Napoleon and the writings of Clausewitz. It was, first of all, limited warfare fought with limited means for limited objectives. Warfare was limited, in part, because there was no desire to involve the civilian population for fear of undermining the economic basis of the state. Wars often were long but not intense; battles were apt to destroy expensive professional armies, and for that reason battles were not eagerly sought. In short, soldiers were looked upon as a sort of natural resource which was to be expended very, very carefully. Military operations were turned by design against fortresses, magazines, supply lines, and key positions. This produced a learned style of warfare in which ingenuity and maneuver were more prized than impetuosity in combat. The slow strategy of siegecraft had not yet given way to the aggressive, mobile, combative strategy. War of position prevailed over war of movement, and a strategy of small successive advantages over a strategy of annihilation. This was a different military world from that of Napoleon and of Clausewitz. Perhaps that has been one of our problems in perceiving the Revolutionary War, for we have tended to be somewhat present-minded. By keeping in mind this picture of strategy normally practiced in eighteenth-century warfare before the Revolution, you listeners will have some context within which to place the remarks of our speakers on British and American strategy during the war.

Our first speaker is Professor Ira Gruber who was born in Philadelphia and got his PhD in 1961 at Duke. He has taught at Duke, at the College of William and Mary where he held a prestigious fellowship in the Institute of Early American History and Culture, and at Occidental College. He is now a member of the Department of History at Rice. His book, *The Howe Brothers in the American Revolution*, has been one of the more provocative and, as Professor Shy pointed out, one of the more

thoughtful pieces on the American Revolution. This has been followed by a number of key articles, some of which have appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, which touch upon his subject: British strategy in the Revolution. I am pleased to introduce Professor Ira Gruber.

THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH STRATEGY IN THE WAR FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

Ira D. Gruber

Rice University

This essay examines the origins of British strategy in the War for American Independence.¹ It asks what shaped the decisions of those British leaders charged with putting down the American rebellion of 1775. Neither the king, nor his ministers, nor their commanders in chief previously had faced rebels in arms. What experience and training had they had in conducting a war? How far were their plans influenced by conventional ideas about warfare: strategies employed in Europe and America during the Seven Years War and writings on the art of war? How much were they influenced by their conception of the American rebellion: their understanding of the causes and the extent of the rebellion and their attitudes toward the rebels? To what extent, moreover, were their choices limited by the nature of politics and public administration as well as by the personalities of leading men? To what extent were their choices limited by the availability of men, ships, and supplies; by the willingness of Englishmen to support the war; and by geography, topography, and climate? Finally, in what ways did the intervention of foreign powers affect British strategy? To answer these questions—insofar as they can be answered—is to gain a better understanding of how Britain tried to deal with her rebellious colonies and why she failed.

Although a high proportion of those who did the most to determine British strategy in the American War were men with military experience, few of them were experienced in planning a war. King George III had come to the throne during the Seven Years War and soon took a leading role in military administration. But he was then too young, too unsure of himself, and too much occupied with domestic politics to take a similar part in making strategy.² Three of his ministers—Lord Amherst (Com-

¹ Although men who served in the American War did not use the word, they devoted considerable time to what we call "strategy": "the art of military command, of projecting and directing a campaign"; "the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation . . . including its armed forces to the end that its vital interest shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed." Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, 1944), viii.

² John Brooke, *King George III* (New York, 1972), 66-104; John W. Fortescue, ed., *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783* (London, 1927-1928), I, 1-56.

mander in Chief after 1778), the Earl of Sandwich (First Lord of the Admiralty throughout the American War), and Lord George Germain (Secretary of State for the colonies after November, 1775)—also had held important posts during the wars of mid-century. Only Amherst, who had helped plan and direct the conquest of Canada, was experienced in developing strategy. Sandwich divided his time during the War of the Austrian Succession between administrative chores at the admiralty and diplomatic missions to the continent. Germain, whose promising military career had been cut short by a court-martial in 1759, had never had a command of his own.³ There were, of course, some ministers who were quite innocent of war and strategy prior to the Revolution. Lord North (First Lord of the Treasury) and the Earl of Dartmouth (Secretary of State for the Colonies until November, 1775) had devoted most of their adult lives to politics and public administration.⁴

Like most within the ministry, the generals and admirals destined to command in America during the Revolution had had little experience in making strategy. General Thomas Gage (commander in chief at Boston in 1775), Admiral Lord Howe (commander of the North American squadron from 1776 to 1778), and General John Burgoyne (commander of the Canadian army in 1777) had held independent commands during the Seven Years War: Gage having led a corps toward Montreal in 1759; Howe, expeditions to the coast of France in 1758; and Burgoyne, a force of 3000 in Portugal in 1762. Yet none had been free to devise or pursue his own strategy.⁵ Nor had Generals Guy Carleton (who would command in Canada at the outset of the war), William Howe (commander in chief in the middle colonies between 1775 and 1778), Henry Clinton (Howe's successor in the middle colonies), or Earl Cornwallis (commander in the South, 1780 to 1781) been able to make their own strategy. Carleton and Howe had made their reputations at Quebec, Belle Isle, and Havana; Clinton and Cornwallis, in Germany. Their reputations were built on courage, tactical skill, and administrative talent rather than on strategic insight.

³ J. C. Long, *Lord Jeffery Amherst: A Soldier of the King* (New York, 1933), 80-137; George Martelli, *Jemmy Twitchert: A Life of the Fourth Earl of Sandwich 1718-1792* (London, 1962), 25-37; Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754-1790* in Frank M. Stenton, ed., *The History of Parliament*, II, 390-392; Gerald Saxon Brown, *The American Secretary: The Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain, 1775-1782* (Ann Arbor, 1963), 1-15. Even as commander of British forces in Germany, 1758-1759, Germain was subordinate to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick.

⁴ Namier and Brooke, *House of Commons*, III, 204-208; B. D. Bargar, *Lord Dartmouth and the American Revolution* (Columbia, 1965), 7-159.

⁵ John Richard Alden, *General Gage in America . . .* (Baton Rouge, 1948), 11-64; George Mason, *The Life of Richard Earl Howe* (London, 1803), 4-31; Edward Barrington de Fonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes . . . Derived from the Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. John Burgoyne . . .* (London, 1876), 27-52.

They had established themselves as commanders of regiments and members of staffs, not as commanders in chief.⁶ So, too, with the admirals who would succeed Lord Howe. None had commanded more than a single ship in wartime before being appointed commander in chief in America.⁷

Not only did British officers lack experience in shaping strategy, they also lacked training. Cornwallis alone among the generals and admirals of the American War had studied at a military academy; the others received their early professional training on active service where military theory seldom was taught or discussed. Having reached the rank of colonel or captain by the end of the Seven Years War, most spent the ensuing 12 years of peace pursuing their own private interests. With the fleet and army scattered in small detachments throughout the empire, there were few chances for senior officers to see active service and fewer still to exercise high command.⁸ Officers like the Howes, Clinton, and Burgoyne sought to improve themselves professionally between the wars, but even they seem to have been more interested in tactics and technical innovations than in strategy. They concentrated on training light infantry, improving the design of vessels and the effectiveness of signals and fighting instructions, studying the battlefields of central Europe, and analyzing the training and morale of the French, Prussian, and Austrian armies.⁹ The Howes, Clinton, and Burgoyne were considered to be exceptional officers, yet all demonstrated a conventional preoccupation with tactics, a preoccupation that was reflected in the curriculum of the service academies at Woolwich and Portsmouth and in the few books on the art of war written by Englishmen in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ What interested English officers most were the skills required for managing ships and men in the face of the enemy. Strategy was not then in vogue.

⁶ A. G. Bradley, *Lord Dorchester* (New York, 1926), chap. 2; Bellamy Partridge, *Sir Billy Howe* (London, 1932), 9-12; Namier and Brooke, *House of Commons*, II, 649; William B. Willcox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York, 1964), 9-19; Franklin and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston, 1970), 24-29.

⁷ See John Knox Laughton in the *Dictionary of National Biography* s. v. "Arbuthnot, Marriot," "Gambier, James," and "Graves, Thomas."

⁸ Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, 25-26; James W. Hayes, "The Social and Professional Background of the Officers of the British Army, 1714-1763" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of London, 1956), 113, 118-120, 202-212.

⁹ Partridge, *Howe*, 12; Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1974), 49; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, 32-35; Fonblanque, *Life of Burgoyne*, 55-85.

¹⁰ Hayes, *Social and Professional Background of Officers*, 202-215; Michael Lewis, *England's Sea-Officers: The Story of the Naval Profession* (London, 1948), chap. 6; A Plan of Mathematical Reasoning taught in the Royal Academy Portsmouth Performed by Henry Hotham a student there in 1791, Hotham Deposit, DD HO 7/115, the University of Hull, Hull, England.

Even though British officers lacked experience and training in planning a war, they all knew something of the strategies employed in Europe and America during the Seven Years War. Burgoyne and Cornwallis had lived and studied on the continent; Germain, Clinton, and Cornwallis had served in Germany under German officers; Amherst, Clinton, Howe, and Carleton had worked closely with such avid students of warfare as Ligonier and Wolfe. All of them were exposed, however indirectly, to the torrent of military history and theory that issued from publishers in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and England.¹¹ But British generals and admirals do not seem to have been greatly influenced by continental theories in deciding how to deal with the American rebellion. At the beginning of the war, many shared the widespread notions that regular troops were superior to militia and that it was unwise to rely on citizen soldiers. Some, like Generals Howe and Clinton, subsequently showed an occasional preference for a war of posts: employing patient, cautious maneuvers to force the rebels to yield fortifications, magazines, and territory; keeping close to their bases and moving only when fully prepared; and, above all, avoiding a costly battle.¹² But Howe and Clinton, as well as the other British commanders, all recognized that the American War demanded more than conventional strategy. They all knew that they had to do more than capture a few posts to overturn the rebels and to restore royal government. Thus they risked their armies to achieve decisive political results by storming rebel fortifications, garrisoning extended and exposed positions, and seeking battle. They came to rely increasingly on the use of provincial troops, on campaigns into remote regions, and on a single, decisive battle. Only infrequently did they resort to conventional strategy in the American War.

Far more often the British made their plans to suit their understanding of the rebellion, and that understanding was shaped consistently by ignorance and by wishful thinking. Before the war few among the ministers, generals, and admirals had any clear idea of the causes or extent of colonial opposition to royal government. They did not know whether colonial fears of British authority were genuine or contrived, whether the colonists wanted redress of grievances or independence, or whether those in opposition were a minority of the population. After fighting began, they tended to believe that colonial unrest had been created by a few "turbulent and seditious" persons seeking power for themselves through independence for America and that these few men had

¹¹ Fonblanque, *Life of Burgoyne*, 10, 18-22, 55-85; Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, 25-29; Brown, *American Secretary*, 2-8; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, 13-19; Long, *Amherst*, 15-20, 36-43; Partridge, *Howe*, 9-10; Bradley, *Dorchester*, chap. 2.

¹² For a description of a war of posts see R. R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bulow: From Dynastic to National War," in Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 49-68.

succeeded in imposing their will on the colonists who basically were loyal and contented subjects of the Crown. This interpretation affected British strategy throughout the war. In the opening campaigns it encouraged an almost universal belief that force could be used successfully to break the rebellion: taking leading rebels into custody or destroying the Continental Army and isolating centers of opposition, or sending a few regiments to the best disposed colonies would be sufficient to overturn the rebels and restore Loyalists to power. After France entered the war, the notion that most colonists remained loyal became an even stronger influence on British plans. Ministers and commanders alike designed their campaigns primarily to gain the support of Loyalists, with whose help even depleted British forces might have a chance to recover the colonies and to restore royal government in America.¹³

British leaders agreed that the rebellion could be ended by force; they did not agree that it should be. A majority of the ministry, including men like Germain and Sandwich, was prepared by early 1775 to use whatever force was necessary to sustain royal government in America. This majority was so offended by the colonists' refusal to obey acts of Parliament that it was determined to make them submit by taking or sinking their ships, devastating their ports, destroying their armed forces, and dispersing their revolutionary governments. A minority, no less eager to sustain British authority, wished to bring the rebels into submission with as little fighting as possible. Men like Lord North and Dartmouth feared that even if Britain succeeded in crushing the rebellion, the colonists would ever be resentful, would be reluctant to resume trade with England, and would be eager to escape imperial rule. Thus, these British ministers proposed a variety of measures to secure colonial dependence without permanently alienating the colonists: restrict America's overseas commerce, arrest leading rebels, and offer alternatives to Parliamentary taxation. Even after fighting began, they were ever busy sponsoring peace missions and nominating men of conciliatory disposition for commands in the colonies. They rarely were able to impose their views on the whole ministry, but they managed in subtle ways to influence strategy in the opening campaigns of the war.¹⁴

Just as North and Dartmouth had misgivings about using force, so

¹³ Ira D. Gruber, "The American Revolution as a Conspiracy: The British View," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., (1969), 360-372; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 38-42; John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1973), 130-131, 139-143; Paul H. Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats, A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1964).

¹⁴ Namier and Brooke, *House Commons*, III, 394-395, 208; Brown, *American Secretary*, 45-46; Bargar, *Dartmouth*, iii, 106-108, 116, 131-197; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 3-43, 72-88.

too did many of those who would serve as commanders in chief. None seems to have doubted that Britain had a right to govern the colonies or that she could conquer them, but many questioned the expediency of trying to force the colonists to acknowledge the supremacy of Parliament. Nearly all went to America with reservations about prosecuting a war against civilians and fellow subjects. Some had offered to serve: Gage and Cornwallis, from a sense of duty; the Howes and Burgoyne, in hopes of negotiating a settlement and securing their own reputations. Others, like Clinton, had been persuaded to accept command.¹⁵ None consistently waged the kind of punitive war that a majority of the ministry thought most likely to restore royal government. Carleton and the Howes repeatedly deviated from the ministry's plans in order to promote a reconciliation. They released prisoners, neglected military opportunities, ordered subordinates to cultivate the colonists, and explored every prospect for opening negotiations. For a time Burgoyne also recommended releasing prisoners and sought a peace mission of his own. Even Cornwallis, the most aggressive of British commanders, declined to deal harshly with guerrillas. The ministry never found "a general of active spirit who hate[d] the Americans from principle."¹⁶

Differences of opinion among British leaders were the more significant because authority for managing the war was not well defined and because policy making was all too vulnerable to personal and political influence. During North's administration, strategy was determined in various ways: sometimes by Germain or Sandwich in correspondence with the commanders in chief, sometimes by the commanders in chief acting on their own, sometimes by the cabinet collectively, and rarely, by North or the king. Usually those making decisions let their colleagues know what they were doing, but no one person coordinated British plans, and there were no clear lines of authority within the ministry, between the ministry and its commanders, or within the North American command. The most important of the generals and admirals were, moreover, men of considerable influence in English politics and society, men quite capable of defying a superior, deviating from orders, and using powerful friends to protect themselves or punish their enemies. Merely to question their per-

¹⁵ Alden, *Gage in America*, 200-203; 295-298; Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, 41, 46; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 52-53, 58; Fonblanque, *Life of Burgoyne*, 117-119, 122-125, 211; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, 36-37; Partridge, *Howe*, 173.

¹⁶ Bradley, *Dorchester*, chap. 6-7; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, chap. 4-5; Paul H. Smith, "Sir Guy Carleton: Soldier-Statesman," and George Athan Billias, "John Burgoyne: Ambitious General," in George Athan Billias, ed., *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution* (New York, 1969), 133-134, 157-160; Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, 171; quoting Sir George Brydges Rodney to Germaine, December 22, 1780, in Namier and Brooke, *House of Commons*, III, 370.

formance was to risk serious controversy; to criticize or recall them was to invite a Parliamentary inquiry. So it was that commanders often had the opportunity as well as the political influence and independence of mind to modify strategy to suit themselves.¹⁷ In 1776 the Howes did not wage the punitive war prescribed by a majority of the ministry. The ministry could do little more than urge them to change their ways, await their response, and eventually, try to tease them into resigning. Such cautious measures left the Howes in command until 1778, in a position further to modify the ministry's plans. Much the same was true of Cornwallis who, after being given command in the South, established a correspondence with Germain and began deviating from Clinton's plans for a steady offensive from South Carolina to Virginia. Clinton was furious but he could do little to control or to rescue Cornwallis.¹⁸

What British leaders thought and felt about the rebellion had much to do with the strategy they chose, but so did limited resources. When the government first decided to use force to overturn the rebels, it found the army far too small to conduct any major offensive. As the king forbade the creating of new regiments, the ministry had to rely temporarily on hiring foreign troops—an expedient that was expensive, time consuming, and, ultimately, unsatisfactory. By 1778 losses in battle and the redeployment of troops to the West Indies had so depleted regular forces in the middle colonies that the British resorted to a strategy designed primarily to enlist Loyalist support. That strategy eventually led to disaster in the South. Like the army, the British navy was not equal to its tasks at the beginning of the war. Lord Howe may not have had ships enough in 1776 or 1777 both to support the army and to enforce an effective blockade. After France entered the war, inferiority at sea drove the ministry to adopt a variety of defensive strategies. The weaknesses of the army and navy were due at least in part to the ministry's reluctance to raise taxes and to risk making the war unpopular. Even in 1776 when coercive measures were supported by nearly all Englishmen, the ministry refused to ask Parliament to provide all the forces recommended by the commanders in chief. It ignored their recommendations, urged them to make better use of what forces they had, and accepted almost any proposal that did not require reinforcements. Thus Germain, preoccupied with economy, approved Howe's plan for going to Philadelphia by sea (which required no additional men) while sending Burgoyne to Albany with fewer troops than

¹⁷ Namier and Brooke, *House of Commons*, III, 205, anticipate my generalizations in *Howe Brothers*, chap. 6-11.

¹⁸ Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, chap. 6-9; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, chap. 9-10.

he had requested.¹⁹ After 1778 shortages of ships and men were the result more of the demands of a larger war than of the ministry's desire for economy.

Geography, topography, and climate also affected British strategy. The first major offensive of the war was begun at New York because possession of the Hudson River line promised to isolate New England from the other rebellious colonies, because New York offered supplies for the army and a base for the fleet (temporarily the only base between Nova Scotia and the West Indies), and because the topography of New England and the climate of the South were considered unsuitable for a regular campaign. In short, New York seemed the best possible place to initiate a strategy of destroying the Continental army and breaking the rebellion in New England. British plans for this offensive also recognized the strategic importance of the Atlantic Ocean. The North American squadron was to do more than assist the army in taking New York and Rhode Island. It was also to attack American ports, destroy American shipping, and protect British lines of supply and communication. After Burgoyne surrendered and France entered the war, British leaders made their plans with less attention to geography, topography, and climate. No longer having the forces to strike directly at the Continental army and New England, they decided to combine raids along the seaboard with a gradual recovery of the most loyal colonies.²⁰ They still hoped to use the Atlantic to their advantage, but that hope now rested upon their ability to keep French fleets from intervening in American waters. Their plans for recovering loyal provinces simply defied their sense of geography. British troops would thenceforth be campaigning away from secure bases, over difficult terrain, and in an unhealthy climate. They also would be heavily dependent upon the Royal Navy's control of the sea.

British strategy was, of course, constantly being made and remade as the American War progressed. To understand the origins of that strategy it is necessary to do more than to describe the most persistent influences on British thinking; it is essential to see how those influences blended together

¹⁹ Whether British forces were adequate depended, of course, on how they were to be used. The ministry furnished more troops than General Howe recommended for 1776; it did not supply enough for the strategy that he eventually adopted. Occupying extensive portions of the colonies and blockading the entire coast was almost certain to overtax British resources. Destroying the Continental army and isolating New England might have broken the rebellion before exhausting Britain. Amherst seems to have had a better understanding of the dimensions of the war than anyone in the ministry (Long, *Amherst*, 238). Germain and North were most apprehensive about rising costs: Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, chap. 6, and Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, 1964), 21-22.

²⁰ Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 26-27, 29-31, 79-85, chap. 9.

in various ways and in ever-changing circumstances to determine British plans.

When the North ministry first decided to use force in America, its strategy was shaped primarily by the disposition of British troops and by certain assumptions about the rebellion. During the winter of 1775 nearly two-thirds of all British troops in North America were assembled at Boston, which had long been considered the center of colonial unrest. Assuming that breaking the spirit of rebellion at Boston would intimidate dissidents and encourage Loyalists throughout America, the ministry ordered Gage to seize leading rebels for trial on charges of treason and, subsequently, to take or destroy American fortifications and magazines. The ministry knew that Gage had only 4,000 men, that he would not receive more than 2,000 additional men in 1775, and that his efforts might produce fighting. Still, it was confident that such a force of regulars would be able to disperse any number of untrained colonists and that Britain would gain a decided advantage by precipitating war before the rebels were better prepared. Even after learning of the battles of Lexington and Concord the ministry continued to believe that its limited forces were capable of crushing all opposition. Not only did it order Gage to break out of Boston and to send a detachment to capture New York, but it also directed Admiral Graves to use his 30 warships to attack rebel shipping and towns from Boston to Charleston. By the time these instructions reached America, Gage and Graves could only confess their inability to do what the ministry wished. Discouraged by the Battle of Bunker Hill, Gage declined to campaign further in New England, asked for substantial reinforcements, and recommended that the army begin its next offensive at New York.²¹

In mounting the New York offensive the British developed two incompatible strategies: one called for a devastating application of force, the other for a combination of force and persuasion. Germain, Sandwich, and the Howes had agreed, it seemed, to a plan for ending the war in 1776, a plan for destroying the Continental army and strangling the rebellion in New England. General Howe would take the main British army to New York, seek a decisive battle, and proceed up the Hudson to join Carleton with troops from Canada to seal off New England and to attack the western frontier of Massachusetts. Lord Howe would use the American squadron to support these operations and to impose a blockade on all the rebellious colonies. The ministry also agreed that the Howes should be

²¹ John Shy, "Thomas Gage: Weak Link of Empire," in Billias, ed., *Washington's Opponents*, 24-34; Alden, *Gage in America*, chap. 14-17; Neil R. Stout, *The Royal Navy in America, 1766-1775* . . . (Annapolis, 1973), 162-164; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 12-15, 19-20, 22-23.

commissioned to make peace. It did so to placate Lord North and to hasten colonial surrender. It did not intend or expect that the Howes would try to negotiate peace before they had destroyed the rebellion, but Lord Howe was determined, and his brother willing, to do just that. While the admiral postponed any vigorous prosecution of the war at sea and explored every prospect for a peaceful settlement, the general rejected opportunities for a decisive battle, lost sight of joining the Canadian army, and executed a series of careful flanking maneuvers that forced Washington from Long Island, Manhattan, Westchester, and New Jersey with a minimum of serious fighting. Even though Carleton returned to Canada after exhausting the summer and part of the autumn with conciliatory gestures and a leisurely advance toward Fort Ticonderoga, the Howes' strategy of recovering territory, sheltering Loyalists, and pressing for a reconciliation seemed to be threatening the rebellion until Washington won startling victories at Trenton and Princeton.²² These victories, which blighted both the Howes' hopes for peace and the ministry's best prospects for a military decision, demonstrated the hazards of trying to pursue one strategy with the forces and instructions designed for another.

British strategy for 1777, like that for 1776, was made by men of decidedly different opinions who agreed on a single, comprehensive plan. Germain, Burgoyne, and Clinton all understood that the strategy for 1777 would be much like the initial plans for 1776. At the beginning of the campaign Howe would take Philadelphia while Burgoyne advanced south from Canada toward Albany and amphibious forces struck the coasts of New England. By September Howe and Burgoyne would join forces along the Hudson, presumably to cut all communications between the middle colonies and New England and to attack the frontiers of Massachusetts. Germain certainly approved Howe's several plans for going to Philadelphia, particularly those that did not require the ministry to furnish additional ships and men, and he clearly intended that Howe should join Burgoyne on the Hudson. But Germain was so preoccupied with the cost of the war and was so careful to avoid an open breach with the Howes (he had sent a special emissary to encourage them to be more aggressive) that he did not give General Howe specific directions to join Burgoyne until it was too late for him to do so. The Howes, for their part, were in no mood to accept suggestions. Discouraged by the failure of their conciliatory efforts and feeling responsible for defeats at Trenton and Princeton, they rejected Germain's orders for raids on the coasts of New England, defended their leniency, and clung doggedly to General Howe's plans for

²² Brown, *American Secretary*, 26-28, 45-79; Bradley, *Dorchester*, chap. 7-8; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 26-34 and chap. 3-5; William B. Willcox, "Sir Henry Clinton: Paralysis of Command," in Billias, ed., *Washington's Opponents*, 78-79.

going to Philadelphia in search of Loyalist support—plans that did not include more than a diversion along the lower Hudson to favor Burgoyne's advance. In vain did Clinton, who knew Germain's and Burgoyne's intentions (having been in England during the winter of 1777), try to persuade Howe to support the Canadian army.²³ Howe went to Philadelphia, leaving Burgoyne to surrender at Saratoga.

Burgoyne's surrender led France to enter the war on the side of the rebels and forced the North ministry to make fundamental changes in its strategy. As soon as the Franco-American treaty of amity and commerce was made public, the ministry decided that the war against France would thenceforth take precedence over putting down the American rebellion. The ministry did not intend to withdraw entirely from the rebellious colonies or to concede independence. It decided to redeploy 8000 troops and 31 warships from the middle colonies to the West Indies, Florida, and the British Isles. This decision, in turn, forced the ministry to develop a new strategy for the war in North America. No longer having regular forces enough to consider destroying the Continental army or sealing off New England, the ministry resorted to a war of attrition and gradual reconquest. It began by ordering Clinton and Howe to abandon Philadelphia, to go to New York, and to use raids and a blockade to destroy the colonists' enthusiasm for the war. It also urged Clinton to look to the Loyalists for help. Having long maintained that a majority of the colonists remained loyal and that the war had to be continued for their sake, to rescue them from the tyranny of the rebels, the ministry now proposed to use those Loyalists to win the war. It not only made substantial efforts to enlarge provincial units (offering bounties and disability gratuities as well as half pay and permanent rank for officers), but also encouraged Clinton to do all that he could to support the Loyalists of the middle colonies and the South in order to give them a chance to assert themselves over the rebels.²⁴

Clinton reluctantly accepted the ministry's strategy only to find that Cornwallis, encouraged by Germain, was pursuing a strategy of his own. On becoming commander in chief Clinton set out to do more than to preside over the dismemberment of an army and carry out ineffectual raids. Troops bound for East Florida he diverted to take Savannah and

²³ Brown, *American Secretary* chap. 6-7; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, 156-157, chap. 6-7, 228-231; 235-238; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, chap. 4; Billias, "Burgoyne," in Billias, ed., *Washington's Opponents*, 167-173.

²⁴ Brown, *American Secretary*, chap. 8-9; Long, *Amherst*, chap. 19-21; Gruber, *Howe Brothers*, chap. 9; Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, chap. 6-7; Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, chap. 5-7.

rally the Loyalists of Georgia. He asked Germain for reinforcements so that he could campaign along the Hudson with a prospect of bringing Washington to a decisive action. He undertook a surprisingly successful expedition to the Chesapeake in the spring of 1779. But after learning that he would not receive reinforcements enough to press a regular campaign on the Hudson, he gave up his hopes for a decisive battle in the North in favor of raising Loyalists in the South. In May, 1780, he captured Charleston and left Cornwallis to complete a methodical restoration of royal authority in the South. Cornwallis was to advance slowly northward from Charleston to the Chesapeake allowing the Loyalists in each region time to establish themselves before he moved on. Cornwallis did not long pursue this strategy. He soon found that rebel guerrillas, supported by a detachment of the Continental Army, kept him from creating self-sustaining Loyalist communities. Not having the stomach for truly repressive measures, he decided to undermine the rebels of South Carolina by destroying the Continentals in North Carolina. Twice he plunged across the border in futile efforts to win a decisive victory over Nathanael Greene's army, efforts that served mainly to exhaust his own forces and to destroy those Loyalists who came forth prematurely to join him. In desperation and with encouragement from Germain, who wished to shift the seat of the war to the Chesapeake, Cornwallis abandoned the Carolinas and went to Virginia, still looking for a decisive battle. He found instead opponents unwilling to fight and instructions to establish a naval base on the Chesapeake.²⁵ Before he and Clinton could agree upon any other measures, French and American forces gathered at Yorktown to end the war in North America.

British leaders developed their strategies in the War for American Independence primarily to suit their understanding of the rebellion, their attitudes toward it, and the special circumstances of the war itself. Having had little experience or training in planning a war they only rarely turned to conventional military practices to solve what was a very unconventional military problem. They believed at the outset that regular troops would be far superior to any armed forces that the colonists might raise. A few thousand redcoats would quickly disperse the rebels and restore royal government throughout America. Although the Battle of Bunker Hill discredited this assumption, ministers and commanders remained convinced that as a majority of the colonists were loyal, Britain could end the war by force: employing men and ships enough to destroy the Continental Army, to isolate New England, and to cut off American commerce. Ministers and commanders did not agree that the rebellion should be ended by force. Those who preferred a peaceful resolution were in a posi-

²⁵ Willcox, *Portrait of a General*, chap. 6-10; Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats*, chap. 5-9; Wickwire, *Cornwallis*, chap. 6-16.

tion to give Britain an ambiguous and disjointed strategy during the most critical part of the war, during the campaigns of 1776 and 1777 when the rebellion was neither secure at home nor openly supported abroad. After France entered the war, the ministry changed both its commanders and its plans for ending the rebellion. But its new plans, designed to accommodate depleted forces, were based on the old assumption that most colonists remained loyal or, at least, that in some colonies most were loyal. British forces would spend the remainder of the war searching in vain for ways of restoring Loyalists to power.

It is impossible to know whether the British could have found a successful strategy for the American War, but examining the origins of the strategies they chose makes clear how difficult it was for them to develop coherent or promising plans for ending the rebellion. At the beginning of the war the ministry simply did not have the forces to do what it wished in Massachusetts. When subsequently it provided even more men and ships than the commanders recommended for crushing the rebellion, the commanders decided unilaterally to pursue a more conciliatory strategy—a strategy that required both a larger army and more liberal instructions than the ministry could furnish. Because no one had the authority to determine British plans and because the commanders were men of independent natures and considerable influence, the ministry was unable to change commanders or strategy until Burgoyne had surrendered. By then the prospect of war with France forced the ministry to resort to strategies that formerly had been rejected or considered of secondary importance. It decided to employ those regular forces remaining in the colonies in raids along the coasts and in campaigns designed to raise citizen soldiers in remote, difficult, and unhealthy parts of the colonies. Even these desperate measures were weakened by differences of opinion and by the absence of clear lines of authority. It does, however, seem appropriate that Cornwallis should have made his way to Yorktown not merely in pursuit of the old, contending illusions of popular support and a decisive battle, but also in defiance of one superior and with the encouragement of another.

BILLIAS: Thank you very much, Professor Gruber. Our next speaker is Lieutenant Colonel Dave Richard Palmer, United States Army, who is assigned to the Office of the Chief of Staff. He is the author of a number of books, including *The Art of War in the 17th and 18th Century* which he authored in 1969, *Readings in Current Military History*, *The River and the Rock*, and *The Way of the Fox* which is scheduled for release in early 1975. The topic of his paper is "American Strategy Reconsidered." Colonel Palmer

Lieutenant Colonel DAVE R. PALMER, USA (Office of the Chief of Staff): For the cadets in the crowd let me assure you that, although I am happy to be here today, before I accepted the invitation I made sure that this was not the weekend that Army and Air Force played. I am very sorry, along with all of you, that John Alden could not be here today. I studied under him a decade or so ago and I was anxious to see if he would introduce me as one of his old students, or one of his old mistakes.

AMERICAN STRATEGY RECONSIDERED

Lieutenant Colonel Dave R. Palmer
Office of the Chief of Staff, US Army

I had a conversation not long ago with two friends—one an Army officer, the other a college professor. They asked me if I would be giving this talk in the capacity of a soldier or a historian. My initial response was "both," but that did not work. The professor snorted something about the limited intellectual lineage of military men, and the officer muttered something about people who deal in theory but have no practical experience with the real world. We changed the subject, but I have thought about it since. It was a good question because, for the most part, soldiers have ignored the strategic lessons of the Revolution while historians, over the years, have distorted them. Until recently, for instance, West Point managed to teach a year-long course in military history without including a single lesson on the Revolution. In a way that was an understandable omission on the part of soldiers because the military historians had not produced much that was worthy of study.

First, there was the Parson Weems type of historian who could see no wrong. Washington was a demigod who led the forces of good to their inevitable triumph over the forces of evil. Then came the revisionists who could see no right. Washington was clearly a stumblebum; impressive in some ways, but still a stumblebum. More recently, I am happy to report, historians have staked out a middle position. As a general, Washington is neither a demigod nor a stumblebum, but just where he stands in that large gap in between these two positions we are not yet certain. Most authors, including many in this room today, have shied away from making a systematic appraisal of Washington's generalship. If they mention it at all, it is likely to be characterized rather simplistically as "Fabian." They commend Washington for his ability to avoid decisive battle and to wear his enemy down. Rarely do they credit him with possessing any positive attributes of strategic skill. They picture him as a one-sided general, almost entirely defensive-minded.

During my own research, I rejected that conclusion rather quickly. Wars are not won that way. If nothing else, the soldier in me said that there had to be more to it than that—and there is. I do not claim to have all of the answers, or even all of the questions, but I will present a different interpretation of American strategy during the Revolutionary War.

First, I think it is necessary to establish a basis for communication, to

establish a definition of terms. Part of the historian's problem in coming to grips with Patriot strategy is semantic. Few words in our language are so overworked and so little understood as "strategy." For instance, I looked up "strategy" in the Department of Defense dictionary of military terms before coming out here and found three entries: "strategy," "military strategy," and "national strategy." In our world there seems to be a strategy for almost everything. The football coach has his strategy for Saturday's game; the politician has a strategy to win his next election; the lawyer has a strategy for defending his client. Recently in *Newsday*, the Long Island, New York, newspaper, I read a new phrase: "strategic strategy."

For the sake of mutual understanding let me present an oversimplified frame of reference. Let us academically divide the conduct of war into three parts: tactics, strategy, and grand strategy. Grand strategy prescribes where to fight and why, strategy tells us how to get there, and tactics tell what to do once we are there. By way of example, look at the Patriots' attempt to conquer Canada in 1775. The decision to invade Canada was grand strategy, sending Benedict Arnold up the Kennebec River and Richard Montgomery up the Lake Champlain route was strategy, and the final assault on the fortress of Quebec was tactics.

We are concerned today mostly with grand strategy, with the level at which policy was made and executed. When I speak of strategy or of Washington's strategic ability, this is the level that I have in mind. I might add that Washington had none of these semantic problems. Strategy was a word that he never used, nor did anyone else in his time. It entered the language years after the Revolution and was not defined conceptually until the time of Clausewitz. That does not mean the concept did not exist. As Professor Theodore Ropp has pointed out so well, to say that there was no strategy before Clausewitz would be like saying that there was no sex before Freud.

Strategy has many ingredients—geographical environment of the theater of war, technology, the nature of enemy operations, the personalities of the policy makers are but a few—but the primary factor is the objective of the war. What one is trying to achieve should have the greatest influence on how he ought to act. We must ask the question, what were the overriding goals of the American revolutionaries? There were two, one that everyone knows and one that few recognize. Independence, of course, was the first; territorial expansion was the second. The Americans were not fighting for a strip of land along the Atlantic seaboard, they were fighting for control of the entire continent east of the Mississippi River.

Keep those two goals in mind, for we will return to them later.¹

The Revolutionary War lends itself admirably to academic investigation. From the American side it can be divided into four distinct phases, each presenting an entirely different military situation and each requiring different strategic application of military force. I propose in the next few minutes to summarize those four phases, to describe the American strategy required in each, and to show what path Washington chose at each turn. Lest I be accused of trying to create an aura of suspense in a history symposium, let me hasten to add that Washington emerges as a superb strategist. Clinging to no single strategy he chose the proper course in each case. He won his war, not because victory was foreordained and not because the British forfeited the game, but because he selected the correct strategies and executed them well.

The war's first phase lasted a bit more than 14 months. It opened with that reverberating musket shot on Lexington Green and it ended with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. When it began, royal governors, judges, and generals ruled the colonies, or at least regulated them. When it ended, rebels were in firm control of every English province in North America except those in Canada and Florida. Not a single enemy soldier patrolled a square foot of the soil of the United States.

That was the revolutionary period of the Revolutionary War and it was marked by Patriot aggressiveness. Virtually by definition an insurgency or revolutionary movement is required to assume the offensive. Its purpose is to grab control by destroying or ejecting those authorities and institutions which happen at that moment to possess the coveted power. Revolutionaries, standing on the outside and trying to break in, must take the initiative, must assault the established order. They are the ones who must overcome, and that is precisely what the Americans did.

Sometime during that first summer most, if not all, of the rebellious Americans came to recognize the overriding imperative of retaining the of-

¹ The reader will already have discovered that very little in my address involves new research, though I hope he will not have failed to find some new ideas. The work is synthesis. Most of the data is general knowledge; the way I have combined it and the conclusions I have drawn are original. Therefore, it struck me as somehow pedantic to attempt to fill a page or two with notes, which would add absolutely nothing to the presentation. The notes following are limited to that handful of instances where the reader might want to investigate some point in more detail. All of the ideas put forth in this paper are elaborated upon in my *The Way of the Fox: American Strategy in the War for America, 1775-1783* (Westport, 1975). For a brief essay describing the two American goals, see chapter 6. It should be noted that this paper, for the sake of space, starts with the assumption that American strategy was in fact Washington's strategy. For a defense of the thesis, see chapter 4.

fensive. They realized they could not improve their position by waiting; delay could only worsen it. Logic stood on the side of accomplishing as much as possible before the King could send reinforcements. Washington dared not wait. Time surely would work against him, for London could bolster its strength in America much faster than he could build an able fighting force. The men of the Continental Army were inadequately trained and equipped, the officers were inexperienced, the war chest empty. But, for the time being, the enemy also was weak and the marvelous opportunities could not be passed up. Boldness would have to do for experience, élan for knowledge, spirit for money. In such a case audacity becomes a virtue. On 4 August 1775, only weeks after reaching Boston, Washington wrote perceptively, "... we are in a situation which requires us to run all risks."²

Besides those redcoats besieged in Boston, royal forces still occupied the immense region of Quebec in Canada, a few bases in the Floridas, several forts scattered throughout the far western lands, the maritime province of Nova Scotia, the Bermudas, and numerous other islands in the West Indies. There was also a sprinkling of British officials left in the Thirteen Colonies. For the remainder of the opening act of the war General Washington searched his meager bag of means for ways to get at his foe in every one of those locations.³

Boston was Washington's special concern. Until that city was freed, the rebellion could not be complete. He looked constantly for ways to assail the enemy's barricades. He even considered a rather foolish plan for storming the city over the ice when the bay froze. Finally he forced the British out in March of 1776 by placing cannon on a commanding height.

At that moment 13 provinces in North America were in fact independent. Every one of them was headed by a Patriot government which professed allegiance to the Continental Congress and supported a Continental Army. Americans and Englishmen still contested for Canada, but the 13 colonies were free for the first time of royal military forces. The revolution had succeeded; the insurgents had seized control of the government.

Washington's strategy in the first phase of the war had been simple in the extreme: take the offensive whenever and wherever possible. His single-minded intent had been to grapple with and to defeat the British any place where they could be reached. His forces had been pitifully weak, but

² John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D.C., 1931-1944), III, 386-387.

³ *Ibid.*, III, 302-03, 374, 386-87, 415, 447-48, 475-76, 478n, 511; IV, 112, 172.

at the moment the enemy had been even weaker. The Commander in Chief had taken great chances, but the potential rewards had also been great. The alternative was eventual defeat through disillusion and dissolution. He had been prepared to "run all risques." It is hard to see the shade of Fabius in George Washington during this first phase of the War of Independence.

Having won their independence, Americans were obliged immediately to defend it. That was the burden of the war's second phase, a period that lasted about a year and a half. Only twice did London assemble and send to America large expeditionary forces: one in 1776, the other in 1777.⁴

Patriot generals saw their task as the defense of national shores against a foreign invader. Washington told his men that each of them should keep in mind that the "peace and safety of [the United States depends] solely on the success of our arms." Obviously, that was soldierly rhetoric meant to inspire the troops. But it also was true. The new nation had no allies, no central executive authority, no means to raise funds—in short, none of the trappings usually associated with national defense. Ultimate victory or defeat rested squarely on the performance of the amateurish Continental Army and on the still untried general at its head.

Whereas in the contest's first phase rebels possessed but little to lose, now they had everything at stake. Earlier a military defeat would have been bitter but hardly fatal; now it could signal the death of the infant republic. Previously General Washington's primary thrust had been to defeat the enemy forces; now his foremost requirement was to prevent a decisive defeat of his own army. Still and all, his mission was to defend the United States. He could not sacrifice deliberately any of the new continental states for the sake of saving the Continental Army. He was expected to stand and fight, but it would have to be done in such a way that he could always extricate himself to fight another day. Audacity and boldness had to give way to tenacity and shrewdness. Washington quickly grasped the dilemma inherent in the new rules: if he fought, he could lose all; if he refused to fight, he could lose all. "On every side," he moaned, "there is a choice of difficulties."⁵

His difficulties mounted quickly. British forces pushed him out of Long Island in August, and then out of Manhattan and back to the hills north of White Plains.

⁴ Although it is now a decade old, still the best work on British strategy in the war is Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, 1964).

⁵ Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington*, VI, 28.

Right after losing the Battle of Long Island Washington came fully to grips with the fact that the war had shifted into a new phase which required a different strategy. He now admitted what he had not permitted himself to see before: there was no way that he could defeat a force twice his size, better trained and equipped, and supported by a powerful fleet. On one hand the Patriots could not run lest the cause crumble psychologically; on the other hand they could not fight lest the cause be lost militarily. While considering what to do he arrived at a brilliant solution. On 8 September 1776 he wrote a long letter to Congress which outlined the broad strategy that he would follow for the rest of the year.

On our side the war should be defensive. It can even be called a war of posts. We should on all occasions avoid a general action, and put nothing to the risk. When the fate of America may be at stake on the issue; when the wisdom of cooler moments and experienced men have decided that we should protract the war if possible; I cannot think it safe or wise to adopt a different system.⁶

In that letter lie the key precepts of American strategy for the second phase of the Revolution: "... the war should be defensive . . . a war of posts . . . avoid a general action . . . protract the war" It was a masterpiece of strategic thought, a brilliant blueprint permitting a weak force to stand up to a powerful opponent. There is a curiously modern ring to the ideas, right down to the phraseology. Mao Tse-tung could have used Washington's letter while preparing his thesis on the protracted war, the two concepts are so similar.

Washington withdrew, and withdrew, and withdrew, always staying just a jump ahead of the British. This is when they began to call him "the Old Fox." Finally, when the Americans had fallen all the way back to the Delaware River, the British were overextended. Finding that his opponents had reached the end of their tether, Washington counterattacked almost immediately.

There were reasons for his attack at Trenton other than sheer opportunity. Revolutionary movements feed on morale, and just then the Patriots' morale had sunk pretty low, sapped by the constant retreat. It was obvious to Washington that to save his army and the Revolution he had to risk it.

What he proposed to do was no blind gamble. It may have been audacious and daring, perhaps even desperate, but it was still calculated.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 27-33

Numbers for once favored the Continentals. When you add to that the inestimable benefit of riding with surprise, the American decision to attack hardly seems foolhardy. What is more, Washington now discerned something that he had not noticed in his scrambling withdrawal from the Hudson to the Delaware: the British could be wedged out of New Jersey by strategic maneuver alone. If the Continental Army entrenched itself in the hills of northern New Jersey, the British would not be able to root them out and would not dare bypass them to continue to Philadelphia. While others despaired during those grim days of December, 1776, the Commander in Chief sought not only a tactical success, but a strategic coup as well. Every schoolboy knows what happened. Washington crossed the Delaware and breathed new life into the Revolution.

Events the next year turned the war around. General Burgoyne, attacking southward from Canada, found himself in over his head. Faced by a determined core of Continentals and by a massive mobilization of Yankee militiamen, the British general lost his entire army at Saratoga. At the same time General Howe fought his way into Philadelphia. Once again, as in 1776, he hammered Washington in a series of tactical clashes. But the surprisingly resilient Continental Army emerged from each encounter more or less undaunted and ready to fight again.

Their first meeting was at Brandywine Creek on 11 September. The Continentals still were no match for British and German regulars, either in number or effectiveness. Nevertheless, Americans could not yield Philadelphia without offering resistance. The second largest city in the British Empire was too great a prize to be handed up free. Once again Washington had to cope with his disturbing "choice of difficulties." He picked Brandywine because the stream crossed the road to Philadelphia and afforded a naturally strong defensive position. The General planned to fight, but he also prepared to run: before the battle he sent all of the Army's baggage far to the rear.

Howe refused to make a frontal attack, and slipped instead around Washington's western flank. The Americans recovered, rushed to a new position, and offered battle again. A storm intervened, however, and the British marched into Philadelphia. Washington was not through. Finding his opponent occupying a careless position at Germantown, he flung his army on the surprised garrison. He did not pull off another stroke like Trenton, but he badly scared the British and raised Patriot morale by gaining a near-victory. As the two armies bedded down in winter quarters that cheerless December, the curtain rang down on the second phase of the War of Independence.

If ever Washington could be called a Fabian general, it would be for his actions in 1776 and 1777. Even so, the description does not fit well, for, unlike the original Fabius, the American leader offered battle time and again. To be sure, he offered battle only on his own terms, usually from behind barricades, but he did fight. Twice he found the British guard down, at Trenton and at Germantown, and both times he swiftly launched a counterblow. When confronted with "a choice of difficulties," the aggressive Virginian had not sought solution in flight alone. Even when circumstances dictated a defensive war, he had not excluded from his mind the spirit of the offensive.

Early in 1778 France decided to become actively involved. The war abruptly entered a new and ultimately decisive phase. Just as the second phase had presented Washington a set of conditions wholly different from the first, so was this third one completely unlike either of the previous two. The primary difference was the introduction into the fray of the French navy. Henceforth there would be a fleet to challenge British supremacy in North American waters. Britannia would not rule the waves uncontested. No longer would English generals have the privilege of shifting units freely along the Atlantic seaboard. The only mobility edge that they had ever held over the Americans was thus endangered if not lost altogether.

The great impact of that fact was that now the entire thrust of Washington's strategy could be reversed. Whereas he had been limited to the strategic defensive so long as Great Britain had absolute superiority at sea, the arrival of a French fleet—or even the threat of arrival—would permit him once again to pass over to the offensive. Military victory became possible. The English could be beaten decisively; they could be driven off American soil. Patriots could accept greater risks, for the loss now of a major portion of the Continental Army would not necessarily be fatal. The Revolution had taken too firm a hold in the country to be rooted out by an England at war also with France. Although Washington could not throw caution to the wind, the seriously crumbling domestic situation compelled him to seek a speedy conclusion to the war. Seizing the initiative became the American commander's new imperative, defeating the British army his overriding goal. The predominant theme motivating Washington's activities during the 4 years between Saratoga and Yorktown was the burning desire to smite the foe. In his words, American actions during this period were shaped by the need to make "one great vigorous effort at all hazards" to win the war.⁷

In January, 1778, Washington still had been talking of a war of posts. In June, after learning of the French entry, he at once became eager to at-

⁷ *Ibid.*, XIII, 11.

tack the English main army. When the British started their march from Philadelphia into New Jersey, the Virginian set out in pursuit and initiated the Battle of Monmouth.

Late that summer, a French fleet arrived and the allies attacked the British garrison in Newport, Rhode Island. They failed, but they had attacked. A year later the French admiral returned, this time to cooperate with the Americans in assaulting the British enclave at Savannah. That assault also failed, but not because of any reluctance to attack.

Elsewhere, results in 1779 were better. Washington launched a highly successful punitive expedition against the hostile western Indian tribes, and seized opportunities to attack exposed British posts, such as Stony Point and Paulus Hook. General Clinton, finding the Americans all too eager to fight, and his own forces much too dispersed, was thoroughly frightened when he heard of the French fleet operating along the coast. He shortened his lines around New York and withdrew completely from Rhode Island.

Washington was not alone in his aggressiveness, John Paul Jones made a second raid on the British Isles, George Rogers Clark completed his conquest of the Old Northwest, and the people of Boston, on their own, sent an ambitious, if unsuccessful, expedition off in 40 vessels to raid a British base in Maine. Nor were Americans and Frenchmen doing all the fighting. After Spain entered the war, Bernardo de Galvez, Governor of Louisiana, promptly seized British posts along the Mississippi. All in all, it was not a happy year for George III.

The next year, 1780, a French army under Rochambeau arrived and landed in Rhode Island. Unfortunately, the French fleet got bottled up in France and Washington had to put off his plans for a combined assault on New York City. A year later, though, Admiral De Grasse came to America with a fleet. At last Washington could make his "great vigorous stroke."

I need not recount the campaign of Yorktown, which was a result of the combination of the American and French armies with the French fleet. Yorktown ended England's attempts to subdue her 13 rebellious colonies, thus assuring the independence of the United States of America. For 4 successive years, ever since marching out of Valley Forge, George Washington had been laboring with dogged persistence to put everything together in order to make "one great vigorous effort" to win the war. At long last he had done it. The result was precisely as decisive as he had predicted all along. Where is the trace of Fabian strategy or thinking in those 4 years?

In many ways the 2 years between Yorktown and the official end of the war were more fraught with danger for the young American republic than were any of the previous 6. Having for all intents and purposes won their Revolution, the Patriots came perilously close to throwing it all away.

Euphoria flooded the countryside after the victory at Yorktown, and the nation relaxed. Although the war by no means had ended, the major scenes of confrontation shifted away from North America. The opening of negotiations in Paris added to the widespread sense of security by raising heady expectations of imminent peace. Pressures for disbanding much of the Continental Army were all but irresistible. It took every bit of Washington's power and influence just to keep his army intact during the extended peace talks. What English generals never had been able to do, destroy the Continental Army, Americans very nearly let happen by default. It was true, as most observers sensed, that the conflict had turned a decisive corner. Britain could not have won the American War in the years after Yorktown, but Americans could have forfeited the fruits of their victory, and they verged on doing just that.

Peace, like war, can be won or lost. The war was due to end, but the final form of the peace would be molded by military actions in far-flung theaters ranging from the West Indies to India. The Thirteen Colonies were fated to become a backwater of the contest, although not an unimportant theater. What happened in North America affected what happened elsewhere, and vice versa. Despite the virtual absence of fighting in the United States, the war had not gone away. The goals for which Patriots had sacrificed so much for so long, although at last within sight, were not yet attained. The future of the United States depended upon the stability and strength of the Continental Army. Washington's task was to bring Patriot military power to bear in such a manner as to maintain and, if possible, to strengthen American bargaining power. Having won his war, he set out to win the peace.

With independence all but assured the United States once again had more to lose in battle than it stood to gain. Preserving the Continental Army was now more important than defeating the enemy army. Washington informed his officers that offensive actions were to be undertaken only when the Patriots had a "moral certainty of succeeding." Nonetheless, it would be wrong to portray his attitude during this period as strictly defensive. Recall the two national goals: independence and territorial expansion. Having gained the first, he concentrated now on the second.*

* *Ibid.*, XXIV, 124.

In the winter after Yorktown the Commander in Chief closely monitored actions in the forested western theater, where Americans were operating against the Indians and were trying vainly to take Detroit. He was concerned that British garrisons in the West might give the British a claim to all of that territory. In March, 1782, he ordered that a road be cut from Fort Pitt to Niagara in preparation for a campaign to clear the Great Lakes of enemy posts. In May of that year he considered another invasion of Canada, giving as his reason the necessity to provide for the "future peace and quiet of these states." He also felt that a strike against Halifax would furnish the United States a superior claim to the lucrative northern fishing waters. The future shape of the new nation held his abiding interest up to the very moment when peace was declared. Always thinking of expansion, he even suggested that Congress mount one last campaign against the Indian nations in 1783.⁹

As it turned out, few of Washington's schemes during those final 2 years came to fruition. His energies were consumed just keeping his army intact and more or less ready to respond to a renewal of the fighting, or to prevent British forces from making land grabs. But he never stopped thinking about offensive actions. The final peace treaties were favorable to the United States, largely because American negotiators had always bargained from a position of strength, strength whose continued maintenance had been largely due to the vision and will of George Washington.

Looking at the entire 8 years of the Revolutionary War, what can we say about American strategy?

A general always has two aims: to defeat the enemy and to avoid his own defeat. Sometimes the two are synonymous, sometimes not. Winning is not the same as not losing. At first glance that distinction may seem contrived, but it is not. It is very real and very significant. In the Revolutionary War there were times that cried for victory and others that demanded avoidance of defeat. The watchword some days was "go for broke"; on others it was "take care." Washington seemed always to know the difference.

Consider the conflict's four phases. Each was unique. One might venture even to describe each as a separate war. Although America's two national aims, independence and expansion, never varied, the strategy required to achieve them changed radically from phase to phase.

During the initial period, when the revolutionaries stood outside the law and only a handful of English troops supported royal governments in

⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 164-71, 194-215; XXV, 192-95, 420-21, 446-49, XXVI, 76-78, 85.

the colonies, winning was all-important. Patriots were impelled by opportunity and by necessity to "run all risks" to beat the enemy. Victory was everything and defeat was of little consequence because the rebels had so little to lose. Washington attacked at every conceivable turn, taking the strategic offensive to the full extent of his limited powers.

With the advent of the next phase, however, a wholly different situation confronted Americans. Overnight, enemy strength became overwhelming. What was more, the revolution itself was over. Now there were shores to defend, a foreign aggressor to repel, a nation to keep or to lose. However, with winning all but impossible and defeat a distinct likelihood, not losing became the foremost goal of the Continental Army. If the Revolution were not to be forfeited, the new nation had no alternative but to defend itself. Presented with that painful "choice of difficulties," Washington turned cautious, not refusing battle altogether, and occasionally even precipitating one, but always fighting with his wagons hitched and facing the rear. The strategic defense chosen by the "Old Fox" was designed to defend the United States, to be sure, but its primary purpose was to avoid a decisive defeat of the Continental Army.

The third act again was totally unlike either of the previous two. With the entry of France, and later Spain and Holland, Britain's previously awesome military superiority at once was whittled down to size. The allies even had a slight advantage. Victory once more became possible, while a setback would not necessarily prove fatal. Winning was more important than not losing. Washington labored untiringly to coordinate allied arms in "one great vigorous effort." His strategic offensive was greatly prolonged because of the problems inherent in cooperating with a foreign fleet operating from a base thousands of miles away, but it resulted in ultimate victory.

For the final 2 years the war was fought mainly in theaters away from North America, including the negotiating arenas in Europe. With independence virtually assured, Americans shifted their interest to furthering the expansion of their national borders. Washington's strategic stance was built once again upon the proposition that avoiding a defeat was more important than winning a victory. The Patriots had achieved much and had much to lose. They wanted more, of course, but not at the expense of ground already gained. Perhaps the primary rule of negotiating is that one should deal from strength. Keeping the Continental Army ready and responsive was, therefore, a necessity during the war's final phase. It could neither be squandered in futile offensives nor suffered to dissolve through inactivity.

Through all four phases Washington recognized what had to be done, and he did it. This is a crucial point too often missed and it may be why writers have had so much difficulty in understanding the quality of Washington's strategic ability. Unless one recognizes that the War of Independence was fought in four chapters, it might not be possible to comprehend the genius of General Washington. In the first period, which called for audacity, he was audacious; when the second cried for caution, he turned cautious; as decisive victory became feasible, he thirsted for a decision; when events after Yorktown required steadfastness, he became the nation's solid anchor.

The researcher scratches in vain for a single instance in all the years of the war when Washington ever lost sight of the objectives for which he was fighting. From first to last he never added to or subtracted from the vision of a United States free of Europe and supreme in North America. In those terms, and those alone, he devised his strategy. In those terms, he clearly won his war by his own efforts.

COMMENTARY

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The difference between these two papers represents the difference between simplicity and complexity in the handling of a historical problem. Colonel Palmer's thesis, it seems to me, is two-dimensional, static, and narrowly defined; Professor Gruber's is complex, dynamic, and more comprehensive. To be specific, Palmer sees strategy executed by one man and his thesis is linked inextricably to Washington's personality. Gruber, by contrast, recognizes a number of significant policy-makers and impersonal influences, and he is aware of the interaction between them. Furthermore, when Palmer focuses on Washington, he excludes all other personal and nonpersonal factors that operated on the planning and execution of strategy. On the other hand, Gruber attempts to outline interacting military realities that transcend any one personality and that are propelled by a momentum of their own. Palmer's treatment of strategy is static in terms of time; he takes separate snapshots, so to speak, which freeze Washington's strategy at four separate stages. Gruber depicts strategy as a changing process constantly responding, like a living organism, to a variety of stimuli. As a result, Palmer's war changes from time to time, whereas Gruber's evolves gradually. One way to compare the two papers is to ask the following question: did the strategy produced explain the success or failure of the participants involved? Gruber certainly makes the case that British policy-makers suffocated themselves in indecision, contradiction, and self-deception. But the American victory depicted by Palmer is too reminiscent of the old, uncritical hero-worship disguised as four-phase strategy.

Let me turn first to Professor Gruber's paper. Gruber suggests that British strategy was shaped by certain antecedents, attitudes, assumptions and conditions, many of which persisted throughout the conflict and prevented the formulation of any kind of consistent and coherent war policy that might have made victory possible. After dealing with what might be called preconditions to the conflict and the outbreak of hostilities, Professor Gruber concludes that British commanders quickly realized that they were involved in an unconventional war and soon resorted to unconventional strategy in order to win. They began to rely more on Loyalist troops to carry the burden of fighting, campaigned in remote areas away from established bases, and risked their armies in hopes of drawing the Americans

into a single, decisive action. A central theme throughout the war was the assumption that the rebellion was merely the work of a dissident minority. The notion that the vast majority of the American colonists were loyal played an increasingly important role in Britain's strategic planning. After France entered the war and resources were diverted to other theaters of operation, British reliance on provincial Loyalist troops became even more marked. British officials and field commanders alike designed their campaigns primarily to gain Loyalist support, for without such aid they believed that they could not recover the colonies and restore royal government to America.

Another theme that Professor Gruber stresses is the split in strategic policy that emerged between certain ministers and field commanders regarding the degree of force to be used in putting down the rebellion. Germain and Sandwich were prepared to wage a more punitive war to restore royal rule. The Howes, Burgoyne, and Carleton, however, had reservations about waging a war with harsh measures against colonists whom they regarded as fellow Englishmen. Drawing upon the research in his book on the Howes, Professor Gruber argues that the two brothers in particular were as much interested in persuading and negotiating with the Americans as they were in fighting them.¹ Divided in their views, unrealistic in their assumptions about the nature of the rebellion, and incapable of carrying out a unified policy, British leaders in London and America could produce and implement only an ambiguous and disjointed strategy that was bound to fail. This brief, but admittedly incomplete, statement represents the general thrust of Professor Gruber's remarks.

In my critique let me deal first with certain preconditions in his paper. The fact that British leaders had little or no training in strategy does not provide a suitable explanation for the poor decision-making that took place. Professor Gruber himself concedes that Lord Amherst, the chief advisor to the British high command in London after 1778, had helped to plan the conquest of Canada in the Seven Years' War. More to the point, the British managed to devise successful strategies against the French and Spanish in earlier wars with ministers and commanders who also were inexperienced in matters of strategy.

Professor Gruber points out that no single authority emerged in the course of the Revolutionary War in England to determine, coordinate, and implement British strategy. Once again this is not a sufficient explanation for the breakdown in decision-making. Professor Gruber has in mind, I presume, a great war minister like William Pitt. But Pitt was the exception that proved the rule about the way Britain conducted most of

¹ Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York, 1972).

her wars at this time. Ill-defined lines of authority were a perennial problem for British field commanders in earlier wars. Nevertheless, military men managed to come up with strategies which proved successful against the French in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

To criticize Professor Gruber's paper most meaningfully, one must take issue with his thesis that British commanders recognized the Revolutionary War as an unconventional war and fought such a war most of the time. To quote Professor Gruber, "Only infrequently did they resort to conventional strategy in the American War." I would agree that British commanders perceived the war as an unconventional one; I would agree further that they resorted to unconventional strategy, especially in their employment of Loyalist forces in the South during the later stages of the war. But I believe that Professor Gruber has pushed his thesis much too far in assuming that British commanders resorted to unconventional warfare almost all of the time.

It is impossible to come to grips with his thesis, however, because Professor Gruber has failed to define his terms. He has not provided a meaningful definition of what he considers "conventional" and "unconventional" warfare to be. What he appears to have in mind is the chess-like approach to warfare that was characteristic of the old regime, but it would be presumptuous of me to attribute to him definitions with which he might not agree. Moreover, he has not sought to prove his case by documenting statements made by contemporaries that showed that they were conscious of the unconventionality of the strategy they were employing. Finally, he has not provided a clear-cut chronological framework to indicate precisely when the shift to unconventional warfare occurred, where and when British commanders continued to resort to conventional strategy, and whether in some cases conventional strategy was being employed in one theater of operations by one commander and unconventional strategy in another theater by a different commander.

The result is that one can only render the Scotch verdict on the paper, "not proved," until Professor Gruber supplies us with meaningful definitions of these terms and demonstrates to us when and where they were applied. We need to know more precisely those situations where Generals Howe and Clinton thought that they were engaging in conventional warfare, and when they were not. Such evaluations are complex and require some analysis of both the thought and behavior of the individuals involved. General Howe, for example, made statements in 1776 and 1777 about smashing Washington's army in a decisive battle. From his behavior in the field one could draw an entirely different interpretation: that he hoped to gain such a victory in the classic minuet style of warfare

by maneuvering Washington into a tactically hopeless position where any rational man would disband his army and flee, rather than take on a costly and bloody battle that presumably was unacceptable in the 18th-century world.² We need not only the rhetoric of participants, but an analysis of that rhetoric in terms of their behavior.

There is one final criticism of a general nature which I would levy against the paper as a whole: the failure to provide some idea of the relative importance to be assigned to those factors which helped to shape British strategy. In his opening paragraph Professor Gruber raises a host of considerations which he feels influenced the origins of that strategy. Some are treated at length within the essay, and others are dealt with only in passing. Nowhere are we given any idea of the weight or priority to be assigned to these considerations. Without such a discussion, we cannot measure in meaningful terms the components of the historical problem that he poses for us.

Colonel Palmer's thesis is revisionist in nature and runs counter to the old interpretation which portrays Washington as an inflexible Fabius who consistently avoided battle at all costs and relied upon a strategy of attrition. To Palmer Washington was a superb strategist, flexible in approach, and one who tailored his actions to fit the changing situation in each of the four phases through which the war passed. I find his four-phase approach quite good, but I disagree about the nature of the phases. According to Palmer each phase posed an entirely different military situation, and each stage called for a different strategic application of military force. Washington, who was responsible for making strategy, employed his resources so skillfully that he succeeded in achieving both of America's major war aims: national independence and territorial expansion in the form of acquiring an inland empire beyond the borders of the original colonies. This summary, in substance, is Palmer's thesis, and I find myself in sharp disagreement.

Let me turn first to the title. Palmer's paper is called "American Strategy Reconsidered," but his study focuses entirely upon Washington. To be accurate the paper should be entitled "Washington's Strategy Reconsidered." Such a monolithic approach to the problem, however, is too simplistic; it disregards other individuals and agencies involved in making American strategy. It overlooks, for one thing, the role of Congress in formulating strategy. To give but two examples, Congress

² John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, *Essays on the American Revolution* (New York, 1973), 133.

urged the invasion of Canada and directed that New York City be defended in 1776.³ Washington may have had his own ideas on these subjects, but Congress was very much involved in strategic decision-making. Nor can one disregard the activities of the Board of War created in 1776 as a separate agency to serve as the executive arm of the Congress to help devise strategy.⁴

A second factor to be considered was the separate strategy employed by army commanders in the field located some distance from Washington. In theory field commanders in the two departments other than Washington's Middle Department—the Northern and the Southern Department—were supposed to operate under the direction of the commander in chief. In practice the long lines of communication often made such coordination impossible. Nathanael Greene was left largely to his own devices as commander of the Southern Department in 1780–81, and the unconventional strategy he adopted was a striking contrast to that employed by Washington.⁵

French officers likewise made a substantial contribution to American strategy. Although there is some dispute among scholars, many historians are convinced that "the credit for planning the triumph at Yorktown belongs clearly to the French." Washington's strong preference was for an attack in 1781 by the Franco-American forces upon New York City and upon Clinton's army rather than to attack in the Chesapeake area against Cornwallis' troops. Rochambeau and De Grasse apparently persuaded Washington to change his mind, although they did so with considerable difficulty.⁶

Finally, state governments sometimes were involved in making strategy for reasons of their own. The ill-fated Penobscot expedition of 1779 immediately comes to mind. Without consulting Washington, Massachusetts decided to commit its state navy and some militia to drive the British from this base located on its territory.

³ Russell Weigley, *The American Way of War*, (New York, 1973), 8.

⁴ Edmund C. Burnett, *The Continental Congress* (New York, 1941), 290.

⁵ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, compare chapters one and two.

⁶ John C. Miller, *Triumph of Freedom* (Boston, 1948), 600–602; John R. Alden, *The American Revolution, 1775–1783* (New York, 1954), 243. Harold Larrabee, *Decision at the Chesapeake* (New York, 1964), 246, argues that the "exact degree of his [Washington's] sincerity in urging that New York be attacked is hard to determine." Douglas S. Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography* (7 vols.; New York, 1948–1957), V, 309–310, portrays Washington as showing great flexibility in accepting the change in plan to attack Virginia after he had received De Grasse's letter outlining the proposed program.

With so many individuals, governments, and governmental agencies engaged in strategic decision-making, the problem which Colonel Palmer has addressed obviously calls for a pluralistic rather than a monistic interpretation.

A second problem I find with Colonel Palmer's paper is that I am not persuaded by the rigid four phases into which he has divided the war. Nor can I accept his assumption that Washington consciously devised a different strategy for each stage. To say that Washington's strategy in the first 15 months of the war was "to take the offensive whenever and wherever possible" is to fly in the face of facts. To be sure, while the siege of Boston was under way, Washington and Congress thought in terms of a strategic offensive. Washington proposed a plan to storm Boston, and the Canadian invasion was carried out. But to suggest that raiding Bermuda for gunpowder, raising a fleet of six ships to intercept incoming British supply ships to Boston, and "toying" with the idea of attacking Nova Scotia constituted grand strategy is to stretch the case too far. The first phase ended, in my estimation, as the result of a military development—the collapse of the Canadian campaign—rather than with the political act of signing the Declaration of Independence, as Colonel Palmer has suggested.

Washington's second phase, I believe, constituted a strategic defensive which lasted for 5 years—from the close of the retreat from Canada in July, 1776, until May, 1781, when Washington helped to plan the Yorktown campaign. During this second phase Washington's prime objective was to preserve his army. On the level of grand strategy he was determined to fight defensively. His policy, however, did not preclude tactical offensives against parts, though never the whole, of the main British army. Although he did his best to protect certain fortified posts or places of importance, he was prepared to sacrifice them, if necessary, to keep his army intact. He equated the army with the American cause; as long as his army was in the field, the Revolutionary movement was alive. It was for this reason that he never risked his force against the main British army from the New York campaign in 1776 until Yorktown, except on one occasion—the battle of Brandywine. In all other battles, he committed his troops only against isolated enemy detachments, as at Trenton and Princeton, or against portions of the army, such as Howe's outer defenses at Germantown or Clinton's rear guard at Monmouth.⁷

His strategy during this second phase may be termed a strategy of erosion. He hoped in time to wear down the patience of the British and to force them finally to abandon the war. The strategy of erosion, according

⁷ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 11-12.

to Russell Weigley, was "to wear away the resolution of the British by gradual persistent action against the periphery of their armies [and] was as much offensive purpose as Washington could afford."⁸

Washington's third phase was the strategic offensive which focused on Yorktown. Although he had to adhere to an enforced defensive for five years, Washington was acutely aware of the decisive influence of seapower. He realized all along that a French naval force which could gain superiority off the American coast could decisively tip the balance in favor of the patriots. For this reason he kept requesting for three years that a French fleet be sent to America to cooperate with his force. When the opportunity appeared in 1781, he was ready to shift his grand strategy from defensive to offensive.

There was no fourth phase, as Palmer suggested, because the supposed war aim of expanding the national boundaries was never really given serious consideration. Although there were some discussions with the French about a Canadian invasion in 1782, and certain tentative steps were taken to mount a campaign in Canada and in the West that year, the plans were never carried out. When the possibility of having another French fleet in America arose in 1782, Washington discussed the objectives against which it might be committed. Both targets, New York and Charleston, were within the territorial limits of the United States; both cities were bases for a British army. Washington clearly was concerned with the goal of independence, rather than with the acquisition of new territories.⁹

My third major criticism of Colonel Palmer's paper concerns his evaluation of Washington as a strategic "genius." To my way of thinking Washington's ideas on strategy might have lost the war on three separate occasions. His plan to launch an attack to drive the British army out of Boston in March of 1776 was suicidal, to say the least. "Had he at this early stage of the contest," writes his biographer Thomas Flexner, "well before the Declaration of Independence when so many Americans were still undecided, lost half his army and with it his own prestige, the cause could either have collapsed or shriveled away."¹⁰ Only the good fortune of bad weather prevented him from carrying out the attack. His decision to stand his ground in New York in 1776 and to split his army between New York and Brooklyn in the face of a superior enemy force courted disaster. Only the sluggishness of the Howes saved him from a calamitous defeat

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

⁹ Freeman, *George Washington*, V, 417-418.

¹⁰ Thomas Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution* (3 vols., Boston, 1967-1973), III, 77-78.

and the loss of much of the American high command. In 1781 when he wanted to assault the main British army strongly entrenched at Manhattan, the French commanders luckily persuaded him to change his mind. Because Washington won the war, we tend to forget how many times he came close to losing it.

What can we conclude about Washington as a strategist? Grand strategy does not seem to have been his strong suit, even though his strategy proved successful enough to bring him victory despite his near mistakes. Throughout most of the war, he was a conventional strategist who resorted to the orthodox principles of eighteenth-century warfare. His strategic defensive for 5 years was a strategy of weakness forced upon him by the limited resources at his command. When he had a chance to cooperate with a French army and naval force in 1781, he promptly went on a strategic offensive. His greatest achievement as a general was not as a strategist, but as the builder of an army. By creating this army, making it as professional as its British counterpart in almost all aspects, and keeping it alive in the face of superior enemy forces, he managed to outlast his foe—and with the French help to defeat him.

What can we conclude about the subject of strategy involved in the two papers presented here? American military historians for too long have not been analytical enough in their study of war. For the most part "the character of their work is extremely conventional descriptive history, centering on leading figures, campaigns, and climactic battles, often with a strong antiquarian bent," writes Peter Paret.¹¹ Paret's observation is particularly apropos in the case of the Revolutionary War. John Shy's recent essay was a refreshing departure from the more traditional approach. His penetrating analysis of British strategy showed how their perspective of the war changed from time to time and how their strategy shifted accordingly.¹² The writings of William Willcox and Piers Mackesy on British

¹¹ Peter Paret, "History of War," *Daedalus*, C (1971), 381.

¹² John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in *Essays on the American Revolution*.

strategy likewise have illuminated much which previously was unknown.¹³ The most promising development in recent Revolutionary War research is the comparative history approach implicit in these two papers, and in the recent book by Professor Don Higginbotham. If explored more fully, the differences and the similarities between American and British military strategies might eventually provide us with a more meaningful explanation of America's ultimate success in winning the war. A comparative history approach would do much to counter the valid criticism made against American military historians in their study of war in general and of this war in particular.

¹³ William B. Willcox, "The British Road to Yorktown: A Study in Divided Command," *American Historical Review*, LII (1946), 1-35; "British Strategy in America, 1778," *Journal of Modern History*, XIX (1947), 97-121; "Rhode Island in British Strategy, 1780-81," *ibid.*, XVII (1945), 304-331; "Too Many Cooks: British Planning before Saratoga," *Journal of British Studies*, II (1962), 56-90; *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York, 1964); and "Arbuthnot, Gambier, and Graves: 'Old Women of the Navy'," in George A. Billias, ed., *George Washington's Opponents: British Generals and Admirals in the American Revolution* (New York, 1969). Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), examines the British strategy from the point of view of the ministers in London as well as of the commanders in the field. Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence* (New York, 1971), discusses military attitudes, policies, and practices on a comparative basis in many instances.

DISCUSSION

BILLIAS: Do we have questions or comments from the audience?

Vice Admiral EDWIN B. HOOPER, USN (Ret.) (Director, Naval Historical Center): I was pleased to see the horizons of the military history of the American Revolution reach out as far as the coast this afternoon for awhile, and then with the commentary following the papers go a little bit further at sea.

Colonel Palmer, you mentioned three aspects of warfare: tactics, strategy, and grand strategy. In the corridor today someone suggested to me that the term logistics might be added in view of the 3000 miles of ocean between Britain and America, and in view of the importance of the coastal and inland waterways. It seems to me, Professor Billias, that was a rather strong factor in General Washington's creating his own navy. But it seemed to me, Colonel Palmer, that maybe your grand strategy did not go quite high enough. Perhaps I am overlapping with Professor Billias because we both seem to see your paper as focused upon the land strategy of General Washington.

It seems to me that if we undertake the serious history of the strategy of the Revolutionary War and of the factors which influenced the British leaders to decide to give up the North American Continent south of Canada and east of the Mississippi River, perhaps we should look at some of the other aspects. McKay in the 1890s, for instance, in discussing seizures by ships of the Continental Navy, after he had reviewed the Parliamentary discussions, the periodicals, and the rest, concluded that this was even more decisive than the battles of Saratoga and Yorktown. The question then, Colonel Palmer, is what are you going to call this other strategy which is above grand strategy?

PALMER: Your point, sir, is very well taken. Anyone who attempts to discuss, or study, or implement either tactics, strategy, or grand strategy without a full and complete understanding and use of all the logistical principles that you mentioned would be, I think, doomed to failure. My distinction of grand strategy, of course you can call it anything you want, was simply an effort to get away from the canned campaign aspect of warfare and to look at the level where policies were made and executed. I do not have a term that is higher.

BILLIAS: Admiral, I want to make one point which is partly in answer to your question. One of the embarrassing things about this particular panel (and this is not an implied criticism, it is just the narrow focus that we have

to take) is that, of course, we are centering mostly upon land warfare. And yet, the war was won by naval strategy. In the final analysis it was a naval war. In other words we are looking at the war from a rather narrow perspective and it is rather embarrassing because, in the minds of the British military planners, there was not a land strategy and a naval strategy. It was a joint strategy and there were traces made, of course, as to what kinds of resources would be used. I think that you have made an important point.

BRERETON GREENHOUS (Directorate of History, Canadian Armed Forces): I first would like to congratulate Professor Billias for what I consider an excellent critique. That means that I agree with every word of it, sir. And then I should like to comment on Professor Gruber's paper. He began by saying that the king, and his ministers and generals, had no experience of rebellious subjects, and I would point out that is not quite true. It is true in the case of the king; but 20 years earlier, as any Scotsman would tell you, the British indeed had an experience with rebellious subjects; George Germain (at that time, of course, he was George Sackville) as a regimental officer had been personally involved in that. Now the approach there was very punitive indeed, and one must observe that it worked. I think this is a point worth making.

George Germain never had been in North America, so far as I am aware. His experience was totally a European one—Western Europe—and his experience with putting down rebellious subjects had been successful on a punitive basis. Those field generals whose experience was restricted to Western Europe could have no real concept of the immense logistic problems that existed, and that still exist, in North America. It seems to me, therefore, that when looking at the strategic approach and at the ambiguity which arose among the various British levels, one must bear this very much in mind. Germain's punitive approach could not have worked in North America in the way that it did in Scotland simply because of the geographic immensity of North America. Those military people of that time who had experience of North America knew this very well.

Another thing that surely must have affected the thinking of these generals was the experience in Canada in the Seven Years War and after. By not being punitive, although not exactly getting the enthusiastic loyalty of the French subjects they had acquired, they had at least insured a fairly peaceful development. I think that these are points which need to be taken into consideration when discussing grand strategy.

GRUBER: One of the problems in writing a paper, for it has certain limits imposed upon it, is the problem of refinement. I chose to write about the origins of British strategy. I did not choose to write about why Britain lost

the war. They are very different questions, and to ask them is to produce very different answers. What you say is certainly true. For that matter, the Earl of Sandwich had served as a volunteer against the Scots. I simply did not feel that they had ever had what I thought to be significant experience in dealing with rebels in anything above a kind of subordinate role. After all, both Sandwich and Germain in 1745 were relatively junior people, relatively young. I think that Germain's experiences subsequently, for example, in the Seven Years War, were much more decisive. I think that his experiences even in Ireland, perhaps, as a secretary to the Duke of Dorset, are more telling.

The problem of simplification, of generalization, is bound to produce more questions than it answers, and that is one of the principal difficulties that I have, for example, in dealing with the whole question of the war of posts. To go into an explanation of the war of posts requires a whole book. I have just begun to work on that. I found, for example, in perhaps fifteen libraries of English officers, maybe 300 titles of books on warfare, but only about half a dozen of those 300 were written by Englishmen. The books are almost exclusively continental. Some are classics, many of them are contemporary books. Out of 15 libraries, the books that were most popular were *Caesar's Commentaries*; I think they were in seven libraries out of fifteen, a rather high incidence of one title appearing in many libraries. The problem now is to go back and reconstruct what those books would have meant to their owners, and that is a very difficult undertaking. It is not something that I could do in a paragraph. I felt that I had a paragraph or two for it in a paper of say 16 or 18 paragraphs. So I concede. I certainly would not argue with Professor Billias's criticisms, nor with yours. I would say that I was dealing with a question of origins.

I certainly wish to reinforce what the Admiral said, that the naval side of the war was extremely important. If you ask the question, "Why did the British lose?" the naval aspects are decisive. If you ask the question, "Why did they choose particular strategies?" it is rarely apparent that they chose strategies because of the existence of the Atlantic Ocean. That may help explain why they lost, but the Atlantic Ocean does not figure very large in their strategic thinking.

Brigadier General NOEL F. PARRISH, USAF (Ret) (Trinity University): Most commentators, and I have been commentator more often than a producer of papers, criticize papers for two reasons: because they are too long, or because they leave out too much. You cannot win very well. So there was a great deal left out of these two papers. Now this is an "unconventional" question for that reason. The word "unconventional" is disturbing to some of us who have heard it from a great many historians as well as argued back and forth by some military men. Unless you get down

to the nitty-gritty of what happened, you can bandy that word around rather freely. For instance, Greene in the South risked his army repeatedly against the main British force, and yet he is called unconventional. He risked his army more than Washington who was called conventional. So, unless you concentrate on what really happened, you can get fouled up in these terminologies. Even military men get fouled up once they get involved in rhetoric rather than concentrating on the action. In view of that, I would like to ask Colonel Palmer and Professor Gruber, what is their reaction to the critique?

CRUBER: I really thought that I had attempted to respond to the criticism by saying that I certainly accept it. I do not argue that I have fully defined conventional warfare, that I have produced numerous illustrations of Howe saying, "Well, I think this month that I'll adopt a war of posts," and then saying next month, "Now, I've had enough of the war of posts." I can produce a variety of examples which I think that most of you would accept as fitting rather nicely into a war of posts. And then you can produce other examples that fit very nicely into what we might say was unconventional warfare. I think that maybe in very general terms I would like to say one thing--as I understand it, a war of posts did not usually seek decisive political results, the overturn of another government. In that sense, the British never fought a conventional warfare. They sought to overturn revolutionary governments throughout the war. I think that is an important distinction to make. And I think they all knew they were doing that. I do not think they ever mistook that.

I think that it is rather difficult to go on to discuss particular matters. I would just like to say that I think the comments were well made in good spirit. With a longer work you might be able to deal with some of them.

PALMER: I would say basically the same thing. There are points on which Professor Billias and I obviously disagree now and would disagree on forever if we continued talking about it. He is welcome to his opinion. But there are other points on which I think his criticism would be mitigated somewhat, or will be mitigated somewhat, when he reads my book and discovers the parts that were left out of this paper.

There is one very serious omission in my paper, and I realize that it was not there. Since he brought it up, I think that I should cover it. I know that time does not allow me fully to justify my comment, so I will simply throw this out and let it wiggle there with the rest of my paper. Who made strategy in the Revolution? This was a question with which I had to come to grips. I did not do it today, but I had to spend a great deal of time answering that question. In a nutshell, George Washington made strategy. Now, true, Congress at times dabbled in it. But for the most part, espe-

cially after the first year or so of the war, they backed out, and every time things got tough they were very quick to thrust it on Washington. And in one case, I think maybe the prime example, they sent a committee to camp to confer with the commander on strategy. They did not call it strategy, but the next year's campaign was based on it, and the instructions to that committee were to confer with the general, but to issue no orders unless he fully agreed.

The Banquet Address
"A Seaman's View of the Revolution"

OPENING REMARKS

Colonel ALFRED F. HURLEY (USAF Academy): Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, Rear Admiral and Mrs. Hayes.

Given the established prominence of our civilian scholars in the daytime working sessions, the symposium planning committee has attempted each time to select a prominent military man as banquet speaker. Our intent is to spotlight the joint civilian-military approach that this study of military affairs is designed to foster. Previous speakers who have fulfilled this role have included General Lauris Norstad, Vice Admiral John T. Hayward, General Sir John Winthrop Hackett and Major General Haywood S. Hansell.

We are honored to welcome as our guest speaker a gentleman who has been for two decades a leading scholar of naval history, Rear Admiral John D. Hayes. Admiral Hayes graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1924 and served at sea regularly until his retirement from active duty in 1954. His experience as a naval officer has been broad and varied ranging from the command of naval vessels in World War II to his involvement in the planning of the Philippine and Borneo operations for the Seventh Amphibious Force. During the Korean war he commanded Service Squadron One in the Pacific Fleet.

Since his retirement in 1954 Admiral Hayes has been deeply involved in military history and has been called on to lecture at the Naval Academy, the Naval War College and the Smithsonian Institution. He is past president of the American Military Institute and has written widely. His articles have appeared frequently in the *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*. A major work, *The Writings of Admiral Stephen B. Luce*, will be published in January of 1975.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to present to you this evening, Rear Admiral John D. Hayes.

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A SEAMAN'S VIEW OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Rear Admiral John D. Hayes, USN (Ret.)

General Allen, cadets of the Air Force Academy, future military leaders and, I hope, military historians, ladies and gentlemen:

There can be no doubt about my being happy to be here tonight for there is nothing an old man enjoys more than to have young people listen to him, and all here tonight are young to me. You know, the gold that Admiral Hooper [in the audience] carries about on his uniform is no indication of his actual rank. There are only three real grades in the sea service: old fuds, young studs, and lieutenant commanders. I suspect that it is the same in the Air Force. So you majors on the faculty, do not be too anxious about promotion. You will be in the last grade, as I have been, for a long time. For me it has been great fun, spending it in military history.

There is an Air Force version of that young stud-old fud saw. I do not know the official meanings of the pilot's wings you people wear, but I have my own: if you have straight wings, you can fly; if you have wings and a star, you can fly anything; if you have wings, and a star, and a wreath, you are too old to fly.

We must be ecumenical these days, so I will reveal what a naval aviator captain has in his flying kit. He has a baseball cap and a co-pilot. . . . But I must get on with my job.

I show here two contemporary maps or, as we sailors prefer to call them, charts of the Revolutionary War. [The charts were projected onto a screen.] I hope that they can give you some feeling for the maritime character of my talk. These are from the *Atlas of 18th Century Maps and Charts* produced by the Naval History Center in 1972 as a supplement to its many-volume work, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, of which six so far have been published. There are 20 maps in this collection. That on the left, No. 1, has the title, "A Chart of the Atlantic Ocean. Printed by Robert Sayer, Map and Printsetter, No. 53 Fleet Street, London, 20 February 1775." It presents the stage for the historical drama that we are reviewing at this meeting: the North Atlantic Ocean, the sea area with which historians must be thoroughly familiar if they are fully and properly to depict the American Revolution. Great Britain lost her colonies because she could not support a war across 3,000 miles of that ocean.

The second, a French chart, presents the scene of the Yorktown campaign. Its legend reads in part, "Chart of Chesapeake Bay and the navigable waters of the James, York, Potomac, Patuxent, Patapsco, Choptank and Pokomac Rivers." These names are familiar to the fortunate people, including midshipmen, who have lived on Chesapeake Bay. The legend goes on. "Drawn for use of the King's ships according to English charts and particularly those of Anthony Smith of St. Mary's." The date is 1778. St. Mary's, Maryland, is near the mouth of the Potomac River and Mr. Smith was a Chesapeake Bay pilot.

My talk can begin where this afternoon's meeting ended, with agreement that the American Revolution was a naval war. I am a logistics man by training and experience and, therefore, I believe that in a maritime struggle against a sea power, as was the case in the American Revolution, warfare against shipping is a greater determinant than is naval action. This is contrary to A. T. Mahan, I know. I also have what may be considered an offbeat thesis about the Revolution: the British lost that war before the French entered it early in 1778. However, it took the Americans 3 more years to win it and then only with much French help.

At the beginning of hostilities English leaders made the invalid assumption that supplies for their army in North America could be obtained locally, as was done during the Seven Years' War. Evidently they forgot that Washington was also in that war, and he saw to it that no such supplies were available. Even fodder for horses had to be transported overseas. I think that Professor David Syrett bears me out in this in the paper he gave at the International Commission for Maritime History in London last July. I quote him: "When at the end of 1776, the Americans turned the tables on the British with a winter offensive in New Jersey and began cruiser warfare in European Seas, the British Army in America became a logistical liability. Moreover, the blockade, possibly the only means of choking off the Rebellion, had its strength sapped by a shortage of ships."

British planners also forgot that in those days many enterprising Americans from Chesapeake Bay northward made their living as merchant shippers and fishermen. During the Revolution, with these livelihoods gone, they turned to commerce warfare. In privateers they captured British vessels in areas off Newfoundland and in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies where convoys broke up so that ships could proceed to their various ports. As already noted, cruisers and privateers also carried this war against shipping into waters off the British Isles.

During the past decade this maritime character of the Revolution has become more widely recognized, largely through better understanding of the British side of the war. Americans, however still will not have a com-

plete or a true portrayal of their fight for independence until the French contribution receives much more treatment than it has been given over the last half century.

French support in the American Revolution was completely maritime and took two forms: first, the use of ports in Northwest France as bases for commerce warfare against shipping in British home waters, and second, direct naval aid that eventually produced the Yorktown success. The commerce warfare side was largely the work of Benjamin Franklin and of two virtually unknown naval captains, Lambert Wickes and Gustavus Conyngham. It is my belief that when a detailed version of the French contribution becomes fully a part of American history, Admiral Benjamin Franklin will hold a military place equal to that of General George Washington.

Lambert Wickes in his small frigate *Reprisal* carried Franklin in late 1776 to France where the old man was to be one of three commissioners to that country. Wickes then proceeded to British waters for warfare against shipping in accordance with his orders from the Continental Congress. These read in part, "Let Old England know they have an active enemy at their door." That he did. He captured 25 ships in as many days, insurance rates jumped to 28 percent, British merchants shifted cargoes to French vessels, and resentment was bitter against the British Admiralty. Warships were deployed immediately to catch Wickes, but no British man-of-war was to take him. However, a greater enemy did—the sea. *Reprisal*, en route home in late 1777, foundered in a storm off Newfoundland. Only one man was saved.

Conyngham may have been an even more effective agent of Franklin than was Wickes. He was at it longer and his raiding extended into the North and Irish Seas, around the British Isles, to the coast of Portugal, into the Canary Islands and the Caribbean Sea. He took over 60 ships. Twice captured, he spent one-and-a-half years in Old Mill Prison, Plymouth, England.

The deeds of Wickes and Conyngham have been recorded in only two books. One is a fine biography of Wickes published in 1932 by William Bell Clark, a self-made historian of great ability who died in 1968 at the age of 79 while serving as editor of the first four volumes of the *Naval Documents* series. The second work, *Letters and Papers Relating to the Cruises of Gustavus Conyngham*, was published in 1915 by the Naval History Society, an American attempt to emulate the Naval Records Society of Great Britain. This volume, like that on Wickes, has been little used by naval historians.

One seldom noted fact about commerce warfare, demonstrated by Wickes and Conyngham and evident also in World War II, is the cost in effort it imposes on the sea power. Both captains forced the British to deploy ships in large numbers to waters where the American ship captains operated, ships that were badly needed elsewhere, especially for blockading the coast of America. This indicates the heavy drain imposed on maritime powers whether the weapons of warfare against shipping be cruisers, privateers, or submarines. In World War II Allied anti-submarine efforts in men and materials required six times the resources that Germany devoted to her submarine operations.

Now let us discuss the Yorktown Campaign. This operation, the climax of the American Revolution, is almost unique in military history, for nothing about it went wrong. It was more than a joint amphibious action. It was a concentration of forces, naval and ground, at the objective, the most difficult of military efforts. It required a ground force movement by land and water of more than 500 miles and the sea movement of two naval task forces, one from Newport, Rhode Island, with siege artillery, the other from the West Indies with more ground units embarked. All was done without unified command.

Its plan was the concept of Washington and of Rochambeau, but the man who made it work, the man responsible for its logistics and successful strategy, was Admiral Francois Joseph Paul De Grasse, perhaps the least known major figure of the American Revolution. Biographies of Rochambeau and Lafayette are in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, but not that of De Grasse.

The logistics provided by De Grasse included money and troops requested by Rochambeau. The money was obtained in Cuba on De Grasse's own personal security, and the troops were committed to France's ally, Spain, but borrowed with a promise to return them in 2 months, which he did. De Grasse alone decided that the objective would be Chesapeake Bay, rejecting Washington's choice for a campaign at New York based on the experiences of D'Estaing, another French Admiral who, 3 years before, could not get his big ships into that harbor.

De Grasse showed his greatness most when he took all his 28 heavy ships north to insure a naval superiority there. To do this he had to abandon temporarily the French West Indies and detain 200 merchant ships for 2 months until convoy home could be provided for them. His opponent, George Rodney, sent only 14 heavy ships north under a subordinate to join the seven already there while he returned on sick leave to England convoying British merchantmen with the remainder.

The British fleet under Admiral Thomas Graves that met De Grasse was repulsed off Cape Henry, Virginia. That battle was a tactical draw but strategically was one of the most decisive naval actions in history. By 15 September 1781 a superior French fleet, Washington's and Rochambeau's armies, and the siege guns were all concentrated in Chesapeake Bay. Washington was so confident of victory at Yorktown that, before Cornwallis surrendered, he pressed De Grasse for another joint action, this time against Charleston, South Carolina. But fate and his orders took De Grasse back to the West Indies and to the Shakespearean tragedy of the Battle of the Saints. There a reversal of fortune made him a prisoner of Rodney.

De Grasse has had a good biographer, Charles Lee Lewis, whose work has remained virtually unknown—why I cannot fathom. Its original publisher, the United States Naval Institute, certainly should have this work reprinted for the Bicentennial. Another worthy but neglected work on the Chesapeake campaign is entitled *The Graves Papers*, edited by French E. Chadwick and published in 1916. Fortunately, it has been reprinted. Chadwick was an outstanding historian with recognized definitive works to his credit on Spanish-American relations and on the causes of the Civil War. He was also a foremost naval officer of the period between 1880 and World War I, a contemporary of Mahan, flag captain to Admiral W. T. Sampson in the War with Spain and later President of the Naval War College. His papers certainly should be published.

The question may be asked here, why did the important maritime side of the American Revolution remain unknown for so long? A. T. Mahan gives the answer in his introduction to *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*. "The navy acts on an element strange to most writers, as its members have been from time immemorial, a strange race apart, without prophets of their own, neither themselves nor their calling understood. . . ." There is no reason now why this should continue to be the case with volumes of the *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* becoming available. My history endeavors have been mainly in editing source material. I urge that more be done in this area by the younger men of our discipline. This is the kind of work that PhD candidates should be doing in their dissertations instead of preparing second-rate biographies and historical monographs. Such interpretive work should be left to older people, for I do not believe that a man can judge another until he has lived a full life himself. Carlyle said that it was as difficult to write a good life as to live one, and it took almost as long. Editing, on the other hand, is fascinating work. You let the people who have made the history tell their own story and be judged by their own words. You have the chance to imprint your hallmark on the work in the introduction, in the footnotes and especially through the attention that you give the index.

The *Naval Documents Series* will not preempt all of the primary source material on the naval side of the Revolution. The best remains virtually untouched—personal letters. When a military participant writes his official report, he does not tell all, for he usually has to cover up some of his or another's deficiencies. When he writes his memoirs years later, he often tells of things that never happened. Only when he writes personal letters, especially those to his wife, does he recount the actual story. Unconsciously, he is composing his own archives.

Let us summarize here what is needed to get a "Seaman's View of the American Revolution." First, there must be clear understanding of the French contribution. Second, there must be familiarity with the little-known secondary sources mentioned tonight. Third, there must be use of the *Naval Documents* series, especially the outstanding translations in them of French primary sources. Finally, there must be more, much more, publishing of naval letters.

I wish that I had the time this evening to give attention to the close analogy that I have found between maritime and air warfare. Years ago I wrote a review of James Dugan's and Carroll Stewart's book, *Ploesti: The Great Ground-Air Battle of 1 August 1943*. I have since remained fascinated by that piece of history, which in breadth of concept and intricacy of planning in many ways paralleled Yorktown. I was impressed particularly with the work in that battle of one air group commander, Lieutenant Colonel James T. Posey, a West Pointer who now lives down the road in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Posey's group did not just drop their bombs; he took them down and in and they laid the bombs on the target. That refinery remained out of commission for the rest of the war. Only two of his 22 planes were lost. I hope that some of you cadets will go down to see him. There may be a fine Air Force history project there. More important, you will meet a leader and that is what your profession is all about.

All I really know, however, is the Navy, so I will close on a note about ships and about the kind of people who man them. I do not have a naval document from the Revolution for that purpose. However, I believe that a World War II episode will illustrate the universality of the sea and of the brotherhood of seamen, no matter under what flag they serve.

During that war the light cruiser *Milwaukee* was loaned to the Soviet Union. She was to be turned over at Murmansk. As she approached that port, she was met in accordance with international custom by a boarding officer in a small boat—a naval lieutenant, a tall, blonde, handsome Slav. He climbed the sea ladder, was met by the officer of the deck, saluted and in perfect English, without a trace of accent, requested permission to come

aboard. Then he gave his message: "My captain wishes to express his compliments to your captain and to be of any service to him while he is in this port." Then he came closer to the officer of the deck and spoke in little more than a whisper: "Unofficially, my captain is a son-of-a-bitch. How is yours?"

The Third Session
WHAT KIND OF WAR?

OPENING REMARKS

Major GARY ANDERSON (USAF Academy): The chairman for this morning's session will be Professor Don Higginbotham of the University of North Carolina. As you noticed from last night's introduction, he is the author of the distinguished book in the Macmillan Series, *The War of American Independence*. With no further ado, I will turn it over to Professor Higginbotham.

DON HIGGINBOTHAM (University of North Carolina): Thank you, Gary. Perhaps that introduction gives me the opportunity to be equally brief in displaying the wares of our participants this morning, although their accomplishments certainly speak for themselves. Yesterday, in the session on strategy we dealt with the more formal or orthodox aspects of the Revolutionary struggle. This morning we will deal more with the underside or the unorthodox, no-holds-barred aspects of the Revolution and their impact on the American military tradition. Our first paper this morning will be given by Professor Robert Calhoon, who received his Doctorate from Western Reserve and is a professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has contributed articles to *William and Mary Quarterly*, to *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* and other journals. He is the author of a well-received new book entitled *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*, a volume in the Harcourt-Brace Series entitled *The Founding of the American Republic*. His prosperous, if not fleshy, appearance can be explained by frequent tours of duty on the Bicentennial banquet circuit in recent years. He keeps coming back by popular demand. His paper this morning will be entitled "Civil, Revolutionary, or Partisan: The Loyalists and the Nature of the War for Independence."

While I am at it, perhaps I can handle both introductions now in order to save time. Our other paper this morning will be given by Professor Richard Kohn, a Wisconsin PhD and associate professor of history at Rutgers University, the New Brunswick campus. He is the author of a number of articles that have appeared in such journals as the *William and Mary Quarterly*, and the *Journal of American History*. Indeed, his article a few years ago in the *William and Mary Quarterly* on the Newburgh Conspiracy has provoked a great deal of commentary. Next year Professor Kohn will bring forth a book published by the Free Press entitled *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802*. His paper this morning will be entitled "The Murder of the Militia System in the Aftermath of the American Revolution."

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By performing the dual functions of presiding official, or provider of introductions, and also critic, one faces a psychological problem. You have to build the speakers up and then you have to tear them down. My analyst says that this is a wonderful way for one to relieve himself of all aggressions. But before I do that, I think you are entitled to hear what these gentlemen have to say. First of all, Professor Robert Calhoun.

**CIVIL, REVOLUTIONARY, OR PARTISAN:
THE LOYALISTS AND THE NATURE OF THE WAR
FOR INDEPENDENCE***

Robert M. Calhoon
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The Loyalists are a perplexing element in the history of the War for Independence. Piers Mackesy considers Loyalist writings and documents about the war to be "a nightmare world" of fantasy, contradiction, and venom.¹ The Loyalists were, nonetheless, the most immediate victims of the war and among the closest eye witnesses of the struggle, so they cannot be ignored.² The Loyalists were, to be sure, not an identifiable segment of the population during the war. In the more sparsely settled parts of the middle and southern colonies much of the population was inclined to acquiesce to whatever regime could maintain order and security. In this context, John Shy suggests, the British and Patriots were competing for the allegiance and respect of a sizeable, uncommitted segment of the population which was Loyalist, neutral, inoffensive, or disaffected, depending on an observer's immediate perspective. John Shy has called on historians to think of the war as a "process which entangled large numbers of people for a long period of time in experiences of remarkable intensity."³ To do so for the Loyalists—to define the Loyalists' military role, to appreciate their perception of military reality, and to assess their weight as military assets and liabilities—requires that we examine the ways in which the war worked upon, and interacted with, American society, British and American political systems, and the personalities of the participants. Seeking to place Loyalists in a broad social context, historians have used the terms civil, partisan, and revolutionary to define the kinds of social conflicts which generated and fueled the War for Independence.⁴ Civil war implies

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¹ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (London, 1964), 253, 511.

² See, for example, Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York, 1973), chapters 6, 26.

³ John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict as a Revolutionary War," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1973), 124, 139-140.

⁴ Sidney George Fisher, *Struggle for American Independence* (Philadelphia, 1908); Russell F. Weigley, *The Partisan War: The South Carolina Campaigns of 1780-1782* (Columbia, 1970); Shy, "The American Revolution . . . as a Revolutionary War."

two conventional armies arising within the same populace; partisan war refers to the resort to decentralized, guerilla fighting by at least one side; and revolutionary wars are grand upheavals against existing institutions.

This paper will show how useful these terms can be in examining the factual record of Loyalist military activity, especially in the first half of the war. However, another concept, "internal war," must be used if one is to see the later stages of the war through Loyalist eyes and to understand the psychological impact which the war had on those Loyalists who brooded over the military dilemma confronting them and the British.

From Lexington and Concord in April, 1775, to the British occupation of New York City and much of New Jersey in the autumn and winter of 1776, and onward into the Howe and Burgoyne offensives of 1777, the advent of war in America was a ragged, chaotic affair. No simple formula can account for the nearly 10,000 Loyalists who bore arms during the first half of the war.⁵ There were roughly five categories of impulses that drew Loyalists to arms. In the first place, some Loyalists in arms simply represented Britain's natural assets in America (recently arrived British emigrants, those tied by interest to the British army in New York City or in Albany, or to the Indian Superintendents); second, other Loyalists entered the fray in moments of rage, confusion, or fear; third, still others believed themselves to be strategically situated to unleash terrible vengeance on the rebels and acted from a combination of calculation and impulse; fourth, others responded to the need for organized pacification and reconciliation for supporters of the Crown; and fifth, a few groups of armed Loyalists were agrarian radicals in conflict with aristocratic Patriot elites. Clearly these categories overlap, dissolve into one another, and describe shifting behavior in different circumstances. In light of recent scholarship these are the principal dynamics of Loyalist military involvement; we must, therefore, first examine the way in which each of these factors surfaced and interacted with one another.

During the critical early months of the Revolution in 1775 and 1776, British officials and Loyalist leaders conceptualized boldly about the role which the loyal populace should play in quelling rebellion. At no other time during the war did initiatives in support of British authority occur so freely and spontaneously. While General Thomas Gage did not place a high priority on exploiting weaknesses in Whig control of American territory, he responded positively to every opportunity for preliminary implementation of coordinated, widespread counterrevolutionary activity. He instructed John Stuart and Guy Johnson, Indian superintendents for the southern and northern tribes respectively, to place friendly Indian

⁵ On the numbers of Loyalists in arms see Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 25 (April, 1968), 259-277.

tribes in a posture of readiness to support British military efforts. He permitted Lieutenant Colonel Allen McLean, who on his own initiative had secured authorization to recruit recent Scottish immigrants, to operate from a base in Boston and to send covert agents to New York and the Carolinas. In North Carolina Governor Josiah Martin, a former British officer, generated widespread opposition within the province to the work of the Whig leaders. Then he planned a rising of Loyalist partisans in the backcountry in early 1776 which would march to Wilmington to rendezvous with British regulars. Independent of Martin's appeals for a quick invasion of North Carolina, the ministry decided that such a move would be an effective means to checkmate the contagion. In May, 1775, Gage dispatched part of the regiment at St. Augustine in East Florida to Virginia in order to assist Governor Dunmore in suppressing rebellion. These troops, plus a handful of Virginia Loyalists and runaway slaves, occupied the towns of Gosport and Norfolk where from September, 1775, until forced to evacuate in January, 1776, Dunmore jeopardized the final transit of power in Virginia. At Dunmore's suggestion John Connolly, British governor at Fort Pitt, journeyed to Boston to present to Gage a plan for a massive Tory uprising in the upper Ohio valley and around Fort Detroit. Gage alerted General Guy Carleton in Canada and Guy Johnson in the Mohawk Valley to coordinate their movements with Connolly's.*

None of these risky, imaginative schemes functioned as their planners intended. Connolly was arrested on his way from Boston to Fort Pitt. The North Carolina Loyalists arose prematurely, before the arrival of British troops was yet imminent, and were defeated decisively at the Battle of Moore's Creek. In spite of John Stuart's best efforts to manipulate events on the southern frontier, the Cherokees in the summer of 1776 sought to capitalize on the opportunity posed by the start of hostilities to drive White settlers from their lands. The Indians went to war before the arrival of British troops could divert Patriot militia from a campaign of extermination.

Carleton, for his part, took firm charge of British dealings with the Iroquois during the summer and autumn of 1775. He vetoed Guy Johnson's plan for immediate Indian reprisals against rebel militia around Fort Ticonderoga; probably played a role in the dismissal of Daniel Claus, longtime Indian Superintendent for Quebec; and appointed Colonel John

* For an account of these operations and a bibliography on Loyalist involvement in them see Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 439-442, 462-464, 552-555 and Calhoun, "The Floridas, the Western Frontier, and Vermont: Thoughts on the Hinterland Loyalists," in Samuel Proctor, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Florida: Life on the Frontier* (to be published in 1975 by the University of Florida Press). For an alternative hypothesis on the sources of Loyalist insurgency see the comment by Mary Beth Norton which will be published in that volume. The present essay is indebted considerably to Professor Norton's critique although it does not carry out the kind of macro-analysis which she proposes.

Butler, an aggressive, blustering, western New York landowner, to be acting Indian Superintendent when Guy Johnson, Claus, and Mohawk leader Joseph Brant sailed for England to lobby for a more substantial role in quelling the rebellion. Carleton's fear that premature Indian uprising would jeopardize Quebec's defense was sensible, but that admirable caution was offset by his inability to conduct Indian diplomacy. His jealousy of Claus and Johnson and his reliance on the heavy-handed John Butler deprived the British of a capacity to negotiate effectively with the Iroquois in late 1775. This was the very time when American representatives successfully were luring elements of the Iroquois confederacy into neutrality. Butler's jealousy of Brant and his refusal to treat Mohawk Loyalists as equals significantly reduced British power. In July and August of 1777, when Indians and White Loyalists made up half of Barry St. Leger's force that was besieging Fort Stanwix (in conjunction with Burgoyne's movement into the upper Hudson valley), the Indians were so underfed, poorly supplied, and unsupervised that the 500 Seneca and Mohawk warriors in the offensive added little strength to the British strike force. When the siege on Fort Stanwix failed, retreating Indians plundered and assaulted their British and White Loyalist compatriots.⁷ The failure of these initiatives and preliminary maneuvers made them look clumsy and bizarre. Certainly they point up the truth that irregular warfare is at best only a supplement to, and not a substitute for, conventional military operations. But these British efforts also indicated a willingness to see the armed rebellion as a geo-political process and to experiment with appropriate ways of dealing with an unprecedented military challenge. Even these military setbacks did not stifle irrepressible Loyalist activity in the back country.

The divisions in American society which Martin, Connolly, McLean, Carleton, Dunmore and numerous obscure loyal subjects sought to exploit in 1775 represented some of Britain's natural assets at the outset of the war. The events of 1775-1776 demonstrated how rapidly those assets could be expended. The early months of the war also revealed how quickly new sources of instability within Revolutionary society tended to develop under the pressures of war and how difficult it was for either the British or the Loyalists to respond with the right degree of speed and sensitivity to these opportunities.

Vermont provides a vivid example. Loyalist strength there fluctuated erratically. The allies of the Crown in the New Hampshire Grants region, New York land speculators, were driven from the region in 1775 by the insurgent movement led by Ethan and Ira Allen. Amid chaotic conditions in

⁷ Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois and the American Revolution* (Syracuse, 1972), chapters 5 and 6; James H. O'Donnell, III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, 1973), chapter 2.

1776, especially the absence of an institutional structure of committees, courts, and militia which could manage the suppression of disaffection, mobs harried and threatened some prominent Yankee settlers who had economic or political ties to the departed New York speculators. To the victims who tried to remain inoffensive these attacks seemed capricious and spontaneous. In fright, anger, or confusion some fled to Canada and many enlisted in Loyalist regiments, particularly the Queen's Loyal Rangers under the command of John Peters. When Burgoyne's invasion passed through Castleton, Vermont, in July, 1777, local Loyalists recruited 400 local residents to help clear a road for the British force. After Saratoga, however, Vermont's prosecution of the leaders of this treasonable conduct was strikingly mild and confiscated property was resold to Patriot members of the same families of convicted Loyalists. The strongest political drive in the region, the desire for autonomy from New York, precluded internal bloodletting. Later in the War the Allens' abortive negotiations with the British for a separate peace cast them into alliance with the large minority of covert Loyalists in the state.⁸

The mere presence of large numbers of persons disaffected from the Revolution reflected and aggravated social instability which inhibited either side from exploiting its best opportunities. New Jersey was the classic case of Britain's inability to translate military predominance into political advantage. The Revolutionary regime disintegrated in that province as the British occupied New Jersey after the seizure of New York City in the autumn and early winter of 1776. Nearly 2,500 New Jersey Volunteers drawn from a pool of some 13,000 Loyalist sympathizers provided ample manpower to pacify a conquered province, and the advent of war snapped the already attenuated lines of community between the two factions of Dutch Reformed inhabitants, one reluctantly favoring independence and the other cautiously opposing it. Yet even in this promising setting pacification proved impossible. Plundering by Hessian and British troops and numerous acts of personal vengeance and cruelty by armed Loyalists mocked British pretensions to be protecting the King's friends in the middle colonies. Even after the British were forced to retreat to isolated beachheads at Amboy and New Brunswick, turmoil in New Jersey at first presented the British command in New York City with the opportunity to make inroads and then pulled the mirage-like advantages away. The community of Jersey exiles in New York City continually undermined the

⁸ See Calhoun, "The Floridas, the Western Frontier, and Vermont," *Vermont History*, 34 (October, 1966), 226-234, which analyzes the important documents on military considerations.

British commanders by their penchant for unauthorized terrorist activities.⁹

Garrison towns like New York City gave the British secure bases and havens for Loyalist refugees. Garrison towns also were unstable, abnormal communities filled with violent, rootless men. St. Augustine in East Florida and Pensacola in West Florida were refuges for more than 15,000 Loyalists driven from the southern colonies. In order to organize these bloated wartime communities the British distributed lavish new land grants and assured refugees that British rule in the Floridas would be perpetual. In East Florida large numbers enlisted into a Loyalist provincial corps, the East Florida Rangers, which became a pawn in a vicious power struggle between Colonel Alexander Prevost and Governor Patrick Tonyn. Tonyn appointed the irrepressible South Carolina backcountry partisan, Thomas Brown, commander of the Rangers. First used to patrol the border between East Florida and Georgia, the Rangers increasingly carried out raids into Georgia to steal cattle and slaves.

Ambitious to recapture Georgia on his own initiative and constantly fearful that rebel militia and regulars would swoop down on St. Augustine, Tonyn expected Prevost to function as a subordinate. Tonyn also tried to undercut Indian Superintendent John Stuart's careful management of the Creeks and Choctaws. The impetuous Governor expected Stuart to arrange massive Indian support for the reconquest of Georgia and for the periodic reinforcement of St. Augustine. He could not comprehend Stuart's view that Indian support was a precious commodity that required careful bargaining and prudent use. For his part, Thomas Brown knew that there were thousands of potential Loyalists still living in the Georgia and South Carolina back country and in pockets of the low country as well. With Tonyn's support he committed the Rangers to a dangerous role as spearhead of the reconquest of the back country. Tonyn's and Brown's efforts to instill energy, purpose, and zeal into the Loyalist exile community in East Florida were just the sort of energetic civil-military policy so badly lacking elsewhere in America in 1776-77, but these efforts came at a high price. Incursions into Georgia, attempts to use Indians as shock troops, and the resort to savage, irregular warfare awakened the dispirited and chaotic Revolutionary governments of South

⁹ Paul H. Smith, "The New Jersey Loyalists and the British 'Provincial' Corps in the War for Independence," *New Jersey History*, 87 (Summer, 1969), 69-78; Ira Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York, 1972), 146-154; Adrian C. Leiby, *The Revolutionary War in the Hackensack Valley: The Jersey Dutch and the Neutral Ground* (New Brunswick, 1962).

Carolina and Georgia to the magnitude of the threat which the War posed for their society.¹⁰

The most thorough and competent effort to pacify Revolutionary America and to reinstitute British authority was, of course, Joseph Galloway's administration as Superintendent of Police and of Exports and Imports in occupied Philadelphia from his appointment in December, 1777, until British evacuation the following June. Galloway successfully expanded a subordinate job in the military bureaucracy into that of a powerful administrative overseer of British policy in the city. Since his flight to refuge in New York City in December, 1776, Galloway had labored to persuade Howe to move against Philadelphia. He even arranged for pilots familiar with the Delaware River to rendezvous with the British attack force. He was upset to learn that one of these men was caught and summarily hanged when Howe decided on the less risky and longer Chesapeake route to southeastern Pennsylvania.

Disdainful of Howe's languid movement into the city, Galloway assumed the role of civilian overlord of the region as soon as British troops landed at Head of Elk. He appointed a large staff of assistants and undertook systematic collection of intelligence, certification of Loyalists, exposure of suspected rebel sympathizers, acquisition of food, establishment of hospital administration, and the issuance of regulations on curfews, garbage collection, tavern licenses, relief for the poor, and other local government functions. At his own expense he organized two companies of Loyalist refugees and directed a number of guerilla agents and spies who exhibited great discipline and loyalty. Reestablishing civil government in all but name was for Galloway one essential precondition for reconciliation; the other was constitutional reform along the lines of his 1774 Plan of Union.¹¹

Bitterly disappointed by Howe's failure to move aggressively, Galloway in 1779 was the star witness in a Parliamentary inquiry into Howe's conduct of the war. His ludicrous assertion that eighty percent of

¹⁰ See especially Tonnyn to Germain, October 30, 1776, and Tonnyn to Prevost, January 13, 1777, reprinted in Edgar L. Pennington, "East Florida in the American Revolution," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 9 (1930), 29-31, 33-34 and Tonnyn to Howe, February 24, 1778, Headquarters Papers of the British Army in North America, document no. 962, Colonial Williamsburg Microfilm, Williamsburg, Virginia.

¹¹ John M. Coleman, "Joseph Galloway and the British Administration of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History*, 30 (July, 1963), 272-300; John E. Ferling, "Joseph Galloway's Military Advice: A Loyalist's View of the American Revolution," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 98 (April, 1974), 171-188; for a very different role of Loyalists in pacification, see the Minutes of the Board of Associated Loyalists, January to July, 1781, Henry Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

the population was loyal to the Crown has tended to discredit his assessment of the war. Actually Howe and Galloway shared many of the same assumptions about the nature of the war and of the requirements for pacification. Howe believed that the mass of the population would begin to adhere to the Crown as soon as they saw the Continental Army forced to retreat from centers of population and unable to resist the steady, methodical occupation of territory by British regulars. Galloway predicted that if the Loyalist majority of the population was given an opportunity to support pacification, they would respond in large numbers, provided that they were cajoled, coaxed, and assured of safety and security. Howe's and Galloway's views on the disposition of Loyalist strength and mechanics of pacification differed in emphasis and tone, but not in substance. This may explain why the two men worked together reasonably well during the occupation of Philadelphia in spite of strong mutual antagonism. The real cause of conflict was Howe's disinclination to nourish Galloway's self-importance and the General's deeply bred aversion to zeal and personal singlemindedness.

That urbane quality of mind prevented Howe from sensing that the middle colonies contained many pockets of desperate men willing to risk their safety and security to vent their hostility toward the Revolutionary regime. In the Hudson Valley and on the eastern shore of Maryland these groups were populist rebels hostile to social hierarchy and anxious to disperse political power much more widely than prevailing Whig oligarchs in New York and Maryland would tolerate.

In the Hudson Valley, where tenant unrest had smoldered for a decade, tenants on Livingston Manor, the baronial holdings of the great Whig family of that name, seized the opportunity in 1775 to petition for redress of their own grievances. Some four hundred tenants took up arms for the King in 1776; the militia was riddled with disaffection. Finally in 1777 news of Burgoyne's offensive triggered a premature uprising which was crushed swiftly by militia loyal to the Livingstons.¹² On Maryland's eastern shore the war accentuated sharp economic and social grievances in a region where the Revolutionary regime lacked the institutions and lines of direct political control and influence. Some slaves in the region responded to Lord Dunmore's appeal to Blacks to abandon their masters; the first three slaves caught attempting to flee to the British were publicly hanged, decapitated, and quartered. White Loyalists were more numerous and more difficult to handle. Local committees of observation and the state Council of Safety lacked the practical power or the political strength

¹² Staughton Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution* (Indianapolis, 1967), 68-77.

to impose severe penalties on avowed British sympathizers. Thirty-four percent of eastern shore residents indicted for political offenses during the Revolution were landless, and popular pressure forced judges and juries to deal mildly with them. The militia was paralyzed by demands that officers be locally elected instead of centrally appointed. In salt riots groups of armed men summarily appropriated scarce supplies of that commodity from wealthy Whig merchants. In numerous instances Whig officials were beaten, cursed, and otherwise abused with impunity.¹³

These isolated cases of violent, lower-class Loyalist insurgency did not constitute a real threat to the success of the Revolution, but they manifested an important characteristic of the social order: the presence of a sizeable minority of groups who, in William H. Nelson's apt phrase, "felt weak and threatened" and "had interests they felt needed protection from an American majority."¹⁴ These included pacifist and pietist groups, Mohawk Valley Indian and White settlers alike who looked to the Indian Superintendent for the northern tribes for leadership and protection, and newcomers to the Southern back country. The presence and attitudes of these groups did not mean that Britain could have won the war if she had only tapped this asset; it does mean that Britain's strongest resource could be mobilized only at a price which the mother country could not afford to pay—the dispatch of enough troops to occupy the large regions where fearful, insecure subjects of the Crown resided and thereby to overcome the sense of weakness which immobilized these defensive people. This confused ebb and flow of Loyalist military initiatives helps to define more precisely the nature of the partisan, civil, and revolutionary aspects of the war. Partisan war is irregular war which often involves terror inflicted by informal bands of insurgents. Partisan war occurs when the military and political institutions of one or more of the contending sides have ceased to function in part of the contested territory of the war. A leadership vacuum is created to be filled by men uninhibited by prudence, humanity, or obedience to duly constituted superiors. Irregular war does not replace conventional main force combat, but it occurs on the periphery of conventional combat in areas where neither side can restore stable administration with the use of regular troops. Although it occurs on the periphery of conventional operations, irregular war is destabilizing in that it empowers a relatively small number of men to upset the balance of power previously established between the contending parties. Brant's and Butler's campaigns in the Mohawk and Wyoming Valleys were exercises in partisan war. If the Loyalist resistance movements in the North and South Carolina back country and the Connolly conspiracy in 1775 could have

¹³ Ronald Hoffman, *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics, and the Revolution in Maryland* (Baltimore, 1973), 184–195, 227–239.

¹⁴ William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford, 1961), 91.

been supported promptly by British offensive operations, partisan war would have been much more widespread.

Civil wars are protracted hostilities between irreconcilably antagonistic segments of society within the same country who intend to exclude one another from political power and social advantage and to extirpate one another's beliefs and principles. By several standards the War for Independence was a civil war. Nineteen thousand Loyalists bore arms at one time or another. But civil war was often important as a potential, rather than as an actual, condition. When individual Loyalists beseeched the British to concentrate force in a given region—the Delaware Valley, around the Chesapeake Bay, the Hudson Valley, the Ohio Valley, southeastern Pennsylvania—in order to release the energies of numerous Loyalist inhabitants,¹⁵ these self-appointed strategic advisors were really saying that civil war was an imminent possibility. Such a war, they reasoned, would be based upon rival Loyal and Rebel zones of control. It would occur as soon as the British took the necessary risks and expended sufficient manpower and resources to establish secure zones on the colonial map where Loyalist and passive adherents to the Crown could reside.

A revolutionary war is the hardest to define because, strictly speaking, the term applies to a society in the midst of a radical redistribution of wealth and opportunity or to a society shifting abruptly from one life style to another—conditions which do not entirely obtain in the case of the American Revolution. The rejection of British authority and the advent of republican government aroused strong passions which approximated those of a revolutionary war. Moreover, the volatile mixture of civil and partisan war which occurred spasmodically during the War for Independence made that conflict potentially revolutionary because it raised the spectre of a descent into barbarism.¹⁶

From such a perspective the War for Independence was partisan on its periphery, civil only when Britain threatened to gain secure control over a

¹⁵ Several are described in George W. Lyte, "Some Plans for a Loyalist Stronghold in the Middle Colonies," *Pennsylvania History*, 16 (July, 1949), 177-190; other Loyalist proposals in the Clinton Papers include George Chalmers to Clinton, September 12, 1778; Moses Kirkland to Clinton, October 13, 1778; Neil Jameison to Clinton, December 11, 1778; Christopher Sower narrative, December 13, 1778; West Jersey petitioners to Clinton, ca. 1778; George Chalmers to Clinton, July 26, 1779; Board of Associated Loyalists to Clinton, July 20, 1781; Harden Burnley to Clinton, September 17, 1781; Hector MacAlester to Clinton, n.d.

¹⁶ Richard Maxwell Brown, "The Violent Origins of South Carolina Extremism," unpublished paper; Graymont, *The Iroquois and the American Revolution*, chapter 7; Patrick J. Furlong, "Civilian-Military Conflict and the Restoration of the Royal Province of Georgia, 1778-1782," *Journal of Southern History*, 38 (August, 1972), 415-442.

large territorial area, and revolutionary in discontinuous moments when the prospect of American victory portended social changes which were terrifying to cohesive and self-conscious Loyalist and neutralist constituencies. This provisional model¹⁷ does not rigidly separate civil, partisan, and revolutionary warfare. Residents of the Mohawk Valley, for example, felt that they were involved in a continuous civil war,¹⁸ but only the period of the St. Leger offensive conforms to a precise definition of civil war: two rival, conventional armies faced one another and Britain nearly gained regional dominance. Mohawk depredations against pro-American Oneida villages during this period, however, marked the threshold of partisan warfare by Mohawk warriors and by Butler's raiders against Patriot White settlers and Indians alike.

That very kind of difficulty, however, has impelled political theorists like Harry Eckstein to develop the model of "internal war" to deal with the whole range of conflicts including social revolution, struggles for national liberation, wars of secession, and internal conflicts which accompany political modernization—"any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies." Our understanding of such conflicts is incomplete, Harry Eckstein contends, because historians have focused on the specific "precipitants" of internal war and have neglected the "general disorientive social processes" which predisposed a society to slide into violent conflict. Internal war, moreover, becomes unavoidable only when the established government retains enough power to sustain itself in power long after it has ceased to command respect and acquiescence. In this way the concept of internal war encompasses both the "obstacle" thrown up by the old order and the mobilization of popular support needed to overcome those obstacles.¹⁹ Loyalist writings about the last half of the War for Independence dealt with increasing urgency and cogency with the problem of internal war, with the sources of counter-revolutionary activity which lay hidden in the recesses of the social order.

These Loyalist writings on the nature of the war may not be accurate objective accounts of military realists, but they reveal the harsh impact of the war on the human spirit and imagination, especially on people suddenly convinced that they were victims of both American cruelty and British incompetence. Conceiving of the war as an instrument of punish-

¹⁷ For a variant of this model, see Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 502-506.

¹⁸ Professor David C. Skaggs suggested this difficulty to me.

¹⁹ Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," *History and Theory*, 4 (1954-1955), 133-163.

ment was to recognize the immense complexity of the military dilemma facing the British and the Loyalists. Colonel Robert Gray, South Carolina Loyalist provincial officer, former Whig, and back country native, recognized a yearning for order and fear of social disintegration in occupied South Carolina in the summer of 1780. "The conquest of the province was complete," he wrote; "the loyal . . . inhabitants, . . . one third" of the population "and . . . by no means the wealthiest, readily took up arms to maintain the British government and others enrolled themselves in the [Loyalist] militia, partly because they believed the war to be at an end in the southern provinces and partly to ingratiate themselves with the conquerors. They fondly hoped they would enjoy a respite from the calamities of war and that the restoration of the King's government would restore to them the happiness they enjoyed before the war began. With these views [prevailing] on both sides, the Whigs and Tories seemed to vie with each other in giving proof of the sincerity of their submission" to British authority "and a most profound calm succeeded."

Far from being an advantage to the British, this state of stability was quicksand. Rebels who took an oath of submission returned to their farms and commerce in Charlestown revived. Caught up in this economic bustle, people were outraged by the British army's confiscation of horses, cattle and supplies. The sudden prominence of Loyalists in the civil and military establishment afflicted former Whig officials with "pangs of disappointed ambition." When notorious rebels were captured, "ignorant" British officers paroled them to their plantations and in a few days they broke parole and sought revenge on the Loyalist militiamen who had assisted in their capture. In this fluid situation, which oscillated unpredictably between benumbed submission and furious retaliation, the Loyalist militia lost their cohesion as fighting units—"officers not able to inspire their followers with the confidence necessary for soldiers" and British regulars contemptuous "of a militia among a people differing so much in custom and manners from themselves." The destruction of Ferguson's Loyalist force at King's Mountain and the increasingly brutal treatment of Loyalists captured in the South Carolina back country combined to shatter the tenuous control which the Crown enjoyed in the province. "The unfortunate Loyalist on the frontiers found the fury of the whole war let loose upon him. He was no longer safe to sleep in his house. He hid himself in the swamps." Because the British refused to impose execution on rebel insurgents captured by frontier Loyalists, Gray believed, many Loyalists were forced into collaboration with the rebels in order to be "safe to go to sleep without . . . having his throat cut before morning." Other Loyalists simply resorted to the brutal guerilla tactics familiar to survivors of the Cherokee War—ambush, summary execution

of helpless captives, decapitation of prisoners.²⁰ "In short, the whole province resembled a piece of patch work in which "the inhabitants of every settlement . . . united in sentiment" took up "arms for the side it liked best" and made "continual incursions into one another's settlements."²¹

Both their keen perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the Revolutionary social order and their fixation upon the use of conventional and irregular violence to undermine that order induced the Loyalists during the last half of the war to conceive of the conflict as an instrument of punishment, vengeance, and retribution and as a technique of social control. The Revolutionary social order, however, evaded punishment. Understandably frustrated and angered, the Loyalists who dealt with the military situation became increasingly petulant and meddlesome. As a result their fundamental concern with the war as punishment has been neglected. Central to their viewpoint was the assumption that in 1778-1779 the Revolution was about to collapse and their belief that deft, purposeful British pressure could bring this process to fruition: "the rebel currency is tottering on the very brink of annihilation, if not allowed to recover; . . . the people in general are becoming indifferent if not averse" to a government which has brought them only distress and regimentation; "the enthusiasm which at first enabled the Americans without funds, arrangements, or visible resources to act with such success is now lost in disgust and disappointment . . . and in place of that general union and concert which then prevailed there now remains only a faction and a very limited and artificial army, neither of which are of the people." These were the conclusions which leading Loyalist refugees in New York City asked Major Patrick Ferguson to convey to General Clinton in November, 1779.²² Taking seriously Loyalist testimony about stress in Revolutionary society does not mean that pre-Revolutionary social antagonisms played a significant part in the causal pattern of the Revolution. Such testimony does suggest that the War for Independence was a sufficiently strong disruptive force to trigger or to exacerbate tensions in society which, while generally held in check, deeply alarmed

²⁰ Richard Maxwell Brown, "The Violent Origins of South Carolina Extremism."

²¹ The entire foregoing paragraph is based on "Colonel Robert Gray's Observations of the War in the Carolinas," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, 11 (July, 1910), 139-159; much the same view can be found in an anonymous letter to Lord Rawdon, n.d., ca. 1781, Clinton Papers.

²² Patrick Ferguson to Clinton, November 22, 1779, Clinton Papers; see also Ferguson to Clinton, November 25, 1779; "Cursory Observations on the Present Situation of the Refugees and the Means of Rendering them More Effectually Beneficial," anonymous New York Loyalist to Tryon, November 1, 1775; and Samuel Hake to Clinton, n.d. and January 25, 1782, all in the Clinton Papers.

Revolutionary leaders and impinged on the capacity of their political institutions to function effectively.²³

The erosion of popular support for the Revolution and the artificial nature of the rebel regime, Ferguson told Clinton, provided the keys for a successful British prosecution of the war. Once the rebels realized that they could not drive the British from Georgia and once the fickle French fleet departed American waters, Britain would be free to undertake a campaign of retribution "distressing the countryside," seizing and punishing rebel leaders, and "living off of plunder." At this point Washington would have to do battle or suffer humiliating retreat, the currency would collapse, Congress would forfeit all capacity to punish deserters, and the people would "see no end of their fruitless sufferings." This scenario required Britain to employ "the only common, justifiable . . . modes of coercion, . . . destroying their resources," confiscating the property of anyone who impeded the suppression of the rebellion.

Joseph Galloway's trusted subordinate, Isaac Ogden, made much the same assessment a year earlier. "The rebellion hangs by a slender thread," he assured Galloway in November, 1778. The great majority of Americans "are heartily tired of the war and groan under the yoke of tyranny." John Butler's raids in the Mohawk and Wyoming Valleys so disrupted the provisions trade that men were desperate for peace, and now Butler stood ready to support Clinton in a major offensive anywhere in the middle colonies. "In this situation what is necessary to crush the rebellion, . . . [is] only one vigorous campaign, properly conducted. I mean by . . . a man of *judgment, spirit, and enterprise*."²⁴

Ogden and Ferguson both acknowledged that the rebellion was an authentic social movement. This implied that Congress and the Army, initially at least, had been "of the people" and that "enthusiasm" had for a time taken the place of money, bureaucracy, and leadership. Until British actions dramatically demonstrated the futility of resistance to large segments of the populace, both men conceded, the movement would not die, and to this extent they were acknowledging its indigenous social roots. Ogden and Ferguson further seemed to sense that the rebellion's indigenous character provided the key to its suppression. By carrying the war to the whole society, by using plunder and destruction as

²³ See Shy, "The American Revolution . . . as a Revolutionary War" and Jack P. Green, "The Social Origins of the American Revolution: An Evaluation and an Interpretation," *Political Science Quarterly*, 88 (March, 1973), 1-22. Shy's address, "The American Revolution Today," elsewhere in this volume also deals with the character of social stress arising from the War for Independence.

²⁴ Isaac Ogden to Joseph Galloway, November 22, 1778, Balch Collection, New York Public Library.

psychological weapons, in short, by threatening to precipitate complete social chaos, Britain could convert dissipated rebels into desperate and disillusioned advocates of peace and submission. John Goodrich of Virginia proposed to Clinton a pincer attack on Williamsburg, "the metropolis of infamy," from the James and York Rivers. "I know the genus of the Virginians," he explained; "an example of devastation would have a good effect, the minds of the people struck with a panic would expect the whole country to share the same fate. Offer rewards for bringing to justice the active rebels, let them be proportioned to their rank and consequence . . . , make proper examples, countenance and protect the inoffensive and honest farmers. This done, every rebel will suspect his neighbor, all confidence will cease, the guilty in crowds will retire to the back country without a possibility of removing provisions for their subsistence, hunger will make them desperate and open their eyes, they will fall on their destructive leaders, peace and submission, of course, must follow."¹³

Anticipating in November, 1780, just such an imminent British invasion of Virginia, John Connolly explained to Clinton how the upper Ohio valley could be reclaimed for the Crown by manipulating critical features in the social organization of the region.¹⁴ The population which had burgeoned in the years 1767 and 1776, he reported, consisted of "adventurers allured by the prospect of an idle life" and former tenant farmers from the northern neck of Virginia "whose increase in children and desire to be independent" motivated them to become squatters in a frontier where "civil authority" was too weak to restrain their land grabbing conduct. Overnight the region changed from a "rude wilderness" into a "sociable and tolerably well cultivated settlement." In order to protect their own interest in western lands, Virginia Revolutionary leaders encouraged settlers in the region to join in the rebellion in 1775 and "royal authority" gave way "to a confused democracy." Predictably the rebel leaders in this unstable setting overplayed a strong hand by imposing harsh taxation and militia fines. Alienated by these measures "the great majority" of settlers, who are "valuable loyalists," "would be ready to shed their blood in support of the former constitution, yet, under their present embarrassments, their services are totally lost and we can expect nothing but their empty good wishes." With the Loyalist majority entirely cowed, nothing stood in the way of rebel conquest of the Illinois territory. This would threaten Detroit and Niagara, cut off communications with Canada, and trigger new and more powerful raids down the Mississippi against West Florida.

¹³ John Goodrich to Clinton, November 2, 1778, Clinton Papers.

¹⁴ John Connolly to Clinton, November 25, 1780, Clinton Papers; see also Connolly to Clinton, April 20, 1781, Clinton Papers.

Connolly emphasized the desperate quality of the situation because it contained the key to a miraculous British recovery in the west: "from the description given, your excellency will perceive that many of the people—dispersed over that extensive country—are unencumbered with families and their attendant cares, [or by ownership] of fixed property, accustomed to an erratic life, and ready for every adventure wearing the face of poverty. Abandoned to the influence of designing men, their constitutional courage and hardiness have been prostituted to the basest purposes and their arms opposed to their sovereign and their own proper interests. Policy requires that this unprovoked ill-humor should be turned from its present channel and directed to a proper object of resentment." By dramatically increasing the trade of the Ohio valley with Montreal and Detroit, Britain could give its loyal allies in the region a compelling motive "to support that power from which they derived such striking benefits." Simultaneously, Britain should mobilize the Spanish-hating southern tribes for a massive assault on New Orleans. Once in control of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys Britain could invade western Pennsylvania and occupy Fort Pitt. All of this, Connolly admitted to Clinton, might seem an undertaking of "too considerable a magnitude," but he urged the general to trust him. "I feel myself so firmly convinced of the practicability of what I have advanced that I would stake my salvation upon a favorable outcome."

The Loyalists' determination from 1778 through 1781 to use warfare in order to scourge and punish American society for its sins of ingratitude and disobedience was the same kind of curious mixture of political sagacity and moral absolutism which characterized Whig ideology. The Loyalist conception of military reality was a caricatured mirror image of the Spirit of '76.

HIGGINBOTHAM: Thank you, Professor Calhoon. Professor Calhoon's paper, together with his other work, constitutes a healthy sign that we are taking the Loyalists seriously. We are neither neglecting nor castigating them as historians and novelists did in the nineteenth century. I well remember reading recently a novel called *The Buttonwoods* that was published in Philadelphia in 1848. It was a story of partisan activities in the back country and it pictured the Tories in a very unflattering manner. Among other things mentioned was that each side had its password; the Whig passwords were "duty and honor," while the Tory passwords were "whiskey and women." It may well be that we would have opted for the King's side in the Revolution had those been the vital issues involved.

Let me now give you Professor Kohn who will speak on "The Murder of the Militia System in the Aftermath of the American Revolution."

RICHARD H. KOHN (Rutgers University, New Brunswick): Just by way of introduction, my paper attempts to answer the broader question of the impact of the war on the militia tradition and system. Therefore, you will find that I do not talk a great deal about the war itself, but about events that took place after the Revolution.

THE MURDER OF THE MILITIA SYSTEM IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Richard H. Kohn
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More than a quarter century after the Constitution was adopted, Gouverneur Morris, chairman of the committee of style and author of much of the Constitution's final language, explained that in shaping the militia provision the framers "meant chiefly to provide against . . . the hazarding of the national safety by a reliance on that expensive and inefficient force. An overweening vanity leads the fond many, each man against the conviction of his own heart, to believe or affect to believe, that militia can beat veteran troops in the open field and even play of battle. This idle notion, fed by vaunting demagogues, alarmed us for our country," Morris remembered. "[To] rely on undisciplined, ill-officered men, though each were individually as brave as Caesar, . . . is to act in defiance of reason and experience." "Those, who, during the Revolutionary storm, had confidential acquaintance with the conduct of affairs, knew that to rely on militia was to lean on a broken reed."¹

In spite of their own doubts the framers of the Constitution understood the tremendous popular affection for the militia, how greatly Americans looked to militia for the nation's protection, how deeply ingrained was the concept and tradition of the citizen soldier in American defense. Some of the most politically conscious of the nation's military leaders after the Revolution, although not champions of militia prowess, felt compelled to acknowledge its primacy: "The first principle of the Security of the United States," conceded Henry Knox; "the only palladium of a free people," intoned Timothy Pickering; "this Great Bulwark of our Liberties and independence," echoed George Washington.² In numerous debates after the war, in the Congress and out-

¹ Gouverneur Morris to Moss Kent, January 12, 1815, in Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (rev. ed., New Haven and London, 1937), III, 420-421.

² Henry Knox to George Washington, April 17, 1783, in the George Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Timothy Pickering to George Washington, April 22, 1783, in Octavius Pickering and Charles Upham, *The Life of Timothy Pickering* (Boston, 1863-1867), IV, 432; George Washington, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment," enclosed in George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, May 2, 1783, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington . . .* (Washington, 1931-1944), XXVI, 387. Washington revealed how anti-militia he was when he complimented Steuben on the latter's plan to abolish the state militias as they were then constituted. See George Washington to Baron von Steuben, March 15, 1784, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XXVII, 360.

side, the militia was defended and glorified in the same sacrosanct terms.³ When Alexander Hamilton publicly denigrated "small fugitive bodies of volunteer militia" as the "mimicry of soldiership" in a July 4, 1789, New York City speech attended by some of the nation's top leadership, it was interpreted as a general attack on the militia.⁴ Nearly a year later in the House of Representatives, South Carolina's Aedanus Burke rose to the defense. "I now declare, that the assertion was false," Burke declared heatedly, and then, turning to the crowded gallery where he thought Hamilton sat, "I throw the lie in Colonel Hamilton's face."⁵ Burke later apologized, but not before he extracted from Hamilton an explicit denial of any intention to slur the effectiveness of militia in general.⁶ Endorsement of the militia's importance went beyond public displays for popular consumption. As John Adams travelled through Europe in the 1780s, he repeatedly cited the militia, along with the "Towns, . . . Schools and Churches as the four Causes of the Growth and Defence of N[ew] England" and the source of "the Virtues and talents of the People"—"Temperance, Patience, Fortitude, Prudence, . . . Justice, . . . Sagacity, Knowledge, Judgment, Taste, Skill, Ingenuity, Dexterity, and Industry."⁷

³ For example see the Massachusetts delegates to the Massachusetts Assembly, June 4, 1784, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1921-1938), VII, 543; committee report, Massachusetts Assembly, July 9, 1784, in the Samuel Adams Papers, New York Public Library, New York, New York; "Democratic Federalist," in the Philadelphia *Pennsylvania Packet*, October 3, 1787; "Cincinnatus," in the *New York Journal*, November 22, 1787; William Thompson in *Debates and Proceedings in the Convention of . . . Massachusetts . . . which finally ratified the Constitution* (Boston, 1856), 180; Patrick Henry, George Mason, and Alexander Grayson in Jonathan Elliot, ed., *The Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Constitution . . .* (Washington, 1854), III, 314, 378-381, 385, 388, 412, 415-420, 422-424; petition of the Franklin County Freemen in the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, February 19, 1788, in John Bach McMaster and Frederick D. Stone, eds., *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, 1787-1788* (Lancaster, 1888), 502. For statements in Congress in the 1790s see the debates in Joseph Gales and W. W. Seat on, comps., *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States [Annals of Congress]* (Washington, 1834-1856), 2 Cong., 1 sess. (1791-1792), 337-348, 2 Cong., 2 sess. (1792-1793), 762-768, 773-802, 5 Cong., 2 sess. (1797-1798), 1525-1545, 1631-1707, 1725-1772, 6 Cong., 1 sess. (1799-1800), 247-369.

⁴ Eulogy on the late Major General Greene, July 4, 1789, in Harold C. Syrett et al., eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York, 1961-), V, 350.

⁵ Aedanus Burke speech, March 31, 1790, in the *New York Journal*, April 15, 1790, and Otho H. Williams to Philip Thomas, April 8, 1790, both in Syrett et al., eds., *Papers of Hamilton*, V, 334 note 2, 335 note. See also William L. Smith to Edward Rutledge, April 2, 1790, in George C. Rogers, ed., "The Letters of William Loughton Smith . . .," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXIX (1968), 112.

⁶ Aedanus Burke to Alexander Hamilton, April 7, 1790, in Syrett et al., eds., *Papers of Hamilton*, V, 358.

⁷ John Adams diary, July 21, 1786, in L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), II, 195.

American trust in their local forces reflected more than a century's political and military development. From the first years of settlement colonists had relied on the citizenry organized in local units for defense against Indians. The militia was used in nearly every major conflict involving European foes up until the Revolution. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, colonists were relying more heavily on British forces for protection, while serving as volunteers in specially organized expeditions or in Crown units. But provincial regulars were a rarity except for patrols or garrisons in frontier or seacoast forts, and the men usually were drafted or volunteered out of local militia organizations. Even while the militia system was deteriorating markedly during the generation before the Revolution and falling into disuse in older settled areas, American faith remained unshaken. On the surface the system seemed to work and to be flexible. It permitted different colonies to adapt their forces to special local conditions or, if performance dropped, to modify fines, training, organization, and the conditions of service.⁴

More important still, Americans depended on the militia for political reasons, because they feared and distrusted standing armies, and because they knew of no other institutional alternatives. Throughout most of the colonial era their experience with the British military establishment was one of friction and antagonism, of arrogant, snobbish, or dictatorial officers and officials, of harsh and brutal discipline in the army, of shady enlistment practices—all calculated to fortify the warnings in the anti-standing army literature which made its way across the Atlantic in the early 18th century. In their writings radical Whig opponents of standing armies presented militia as the safe, proper forces for peaceful people who valued liberty. As John Trenchard put it in 1697, "There can be no danger where the Nobility and chief Gentry . . . are the Commanders, and the Body [is]

⁴ An excellent discussion of the militia system is Douglas Edward Leach, *Arms for Empire: Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1607-1763* (The Macmillan Wars of the United States, New York, 1973), chapter 1. Standard published works are Louis Morton, "The Origins of American Military Policy," *Military Affairs*, XXI (1958), 75-82; Jack S. Radabaugh, "The Militia of Colonial Massachusetts," *Military Affairs*, XVIII (1954), 1-18; E. Milton Wheeler, "Development and Organization of the North Carolina Militia," *North Carolina Historical Review*, LXI (1964), 307-323; Philip Alexander Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1910), II, 3-70; and especially John W. Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XX (1963), 175-185. The most complete analyses of the system are in unpublished dissertations, the best of which are David Richard Millar, "The Militia, the Army and Independency in Colonial Massachusetts" (doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1967); Richard Henry Marcus, "The Militia of Colonial Connecticut, 1639-1775: An Institutional Study" (doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, 1965); Archibald Hanna, Jr., "New England Military Institutions, 1693-1750" (doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1950); and Frederick Stokes Aldridge, "Organization and Administration of the Militia System of Colonial Virginia" (doctoral dissertation, American University, 1964).

made up of the Freeholders, . . . unless we can conceive that the Nobility and Gentry will join in an unnatural Design to make void their own Titles to their Estates and Liberties: and if they could entertain so ridiculous a Proposition, they would never be obeyed by the Souldiers."⁹

The Revolution, as historians always have known, strengthened the militia tradition immeasurably. The emplacement of a substantial British force in the colonies, its gradual transfer to urban areas, the resulting conflict, and the explosion of the Boston Massacre in 1770 emblazoned the hatred of standing armies upon the Revolutionary experience. As the British Army, and standing armies generally, became fixed as the symbols of monarchy, of European corruption, of tyranny, and of the ministry's conspiracy against liberty, so too did the militia become identified with America, freedom, republicanism, and colonial virtue. Battles like Bunker Hill, in the outpouring of self-congratulations after the war, enshrined the militia in popular mythology. The central element in the militia tradition, the concept of the citizen soldier, became basic to the language and history of independence and nationhood. As recently as 1940 the Chairman of the Senate Military Affairs Committee publicly proclaimed that the American "people . . . are different from the peoples of virtually every other country . . . from the standpoint of natural, inherited national defense." Announced the Senator, "I am not . . . 'afear'd' of Hitler coming over here because our boys have been trained to shoot."¹⁰ Yet, in spite of the Senator's extravagance, one of the little remembered results of the Revolution was that it set in motion forces that ultimately destroyed the colonial militia as an institution, and prevented it from becoming the primary institution for the defense of the United States.

One of the oldest controversies in the history of warfare, already by 1776 the subject of a century's debate in England and America, was the superiority of regulars as compared to militia in battle. The Revolution, for all its reinforcement of the political popularity of militia, provided no definitive military answer. The war was too complex and the fighting too

⁹ John Trenchard, *An Argument Shewing, that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with Free Government* . . . (London, 1697), 22. I have covered the origin of the prejudice against standing armies in Chapter I of *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* to be published in 1975 by the Free Press. For an excellent discussion of the subject see Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (The Macmillan Wars of the United States, New York, 1971), 7-53.

¹⁰ Senator Robert R. Reynolds of North Carolina, quoted in Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power: A Study of Civil Control of the Military Power in the United States* (Chicago, 1951), 252.

varied to make possible a comparative assessment. The struggle was for national independence and it all too often made a mockery of orthodox strategy and tactics. For one group, however, the lessons were anything but ambiguous. Washington and most of the leaders of the Continental Army, working desperately to maintain in the field a stable force capable of defeating the British in open eighteenth-century battle, saw the militia as undisciplined, ill-organized, and unreliable. They concluded early in the war that militia were inferior, and they never changed their minds. Militia "come in you cannot tell how, go, you cannot tell when; and act, you cannot tell where," Washington wrote in dismay, "consume your Provisions, exhaust your Stores, and leave you at last in a critical moment."¹¹

Recent scholarship, of course, indicates that the militia was central to the winning of independence: screening the Continental Army, preventing the British from maneuvering, foraging, raiding, or pursuing an "oil-slick" strategy without mounting major expeditions, and helping to pen up British forces in urban areas until by the end they depended on overseas transport for nearly all their supplies—an unbelievable financial, administrative, and logistical burden for the government in London.¹² The militia also operated as a political force, intimidating individuals into declaring their allegiance, enforcing loyalty, retaliating against Tories, and drawing the indifferent and the lukewarm into the maelstrom of revolution.¹³ Many British officers learned a grudging respect for American troops, no matter what their origin. As Lord Cornwallis lamented in mid-1781, "I will not say much in praise of the Militia of the Southern Colonies, but the list of British Officers & Soldiers killed & wounded by them since last June, proves but too fatally that they are not wholly contemptible."¹⁴

¹¹ George Washington to the President of Congress, December 20, 1776, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, VI, 403. This is the standard quotation of Washington's opinion of militia. For example see John C. Miller, *Triumph of Freedom, 1775-1783* (Boston, 1948), 237; John K. Mahon, *The American Militia: Decade of Decision, 1789-1800* (University of Florida Monographs Social Sciences No. 6, Gainesville, 1960), 5.

¹² See Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 36, 141, 143, 252, 256, 343-344, 404-407; David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War, 1775-1783* (London, 1970), 125-129, 248; and the complaints by British officers and officials: Charles Stuart to Lord Bute, July 10, 1777, in E. Stuart Wortley, ed., *A Prime Minister and His Son* (London, 1925), 112-113; Sir William Howe to Lord George Germain, January 5, 1777, and January 19, 1778, Lord George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, June 4, 1781, Alexander Leslie to Sir Henry Clinton, December 4, 1781, all in Colonial Office 5, 94/31-32, 95/86-87, 102/1, 104/162, Public Record Office, London.

¹³ Higginbotham, *War of American Independence*, 273-275; John Shy, "The American Revolution: The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson, eds., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1973), 121-156.

¹⁴ Earl of Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, June 30, 1781, Colonial Office 5, 102/506.

What counted most after the war, when Washington questioned his staff and the department heads of the Continental Army in response to a congressional request for ideas on a permanent system of national defense, was the perception of what had occurred and what was needed for the future. From their perspective Washington and his advisors saw militia as difficult and unpredictable in nearly every military situation. They believed that the United States had to have a national army in order to guard the country's natural invasion routes and physically to possess the West where state jurisdiction did not extend. A peacetime force was needed to keep alive military knowledge, to prepare for future conflicts, and to act as the nucleus for wartime armies. To Washington and his officers, warfare demanded practice and expertise. Officers must be professional and, if possible, be trained at military academies. Washington and the officers of the Continental Army, who had fought for *all* the states and who by the end of the war supported efforts to strengthen the central government, also recognized in the militia some very disturbing political implications. Should the new nation decide to rely solely on local institutions for defense, the states and not the Confederation would possess the power of the sword, an essential power of government and one that along with the power of the purse defined the ultimate sovereignty in society.

In 1783 the nationalists faced a difficult dilemma: how to defend a republic which rejected standing armies when they themselves rejected militia for political and military reasons. The solution appeared to be reform and nationalization of state forces. Washington and others in the army believed that three essential changes were necessary, none wholly susceptible to action by the states individually. First, all the militias must become uniform in equipment, organization, and doctrine so that they could fight together effectively in the field. Second, training should be increased dramatically with annual bivouacs and stiffer fines regularly enforced for absence from muster or failure to possess the stipulated arms or accoutrements. Some of Washington's advisors wanted the appointment of federal inspectors to harden training and to monitor the reforms. Third, because adequate training and preparation of the entire male population seemed impractical and wasteful, Washington and the officers advocated classing: singling out the young men (in Washington's words the "Van and flower . . . ever ready for Action and zealous to be employed") for special units, extra training, greater readiness, and additional obligations in military emergencies.¹⁹ All of these reforms, endorsed by Washington and adopted eventually by the nationalists and later the Federalists, required central coordination and management. In short, reform de-

¹⁹ George Washington, "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment," enclosed in George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, May 2, 1783, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XXVI, 389.

manded the assumption of some degree of national control over what always had been purely state institutions.¹⁶

For the next 10 years the arguments for creating a national military establishment and for reforming the militia were inextricably linked together, pushed by nationalists and by their Federalist successors in the belief that the United States had to maintain some system for protection in peacetime and for possible war, and that defense was the responsibility of the central government. Because of the prejudice against standing armies, because of disagreements over the relative merit of regulars and citizen soldiers, and most importantly because of the delicate issue of state versus national power, both of these programs met stiff opposition. Many Americans, unable to distinguish between a national military establishment and the classic standing army of European history, undoubtedly opposed a regular army. But few could disapprove of reforming the militia. After the war, several states moved to revise statutes and to improve their forces.¹⁷ Logic dictated that any future war would require integrated plans and leadership from the central government. Not even opponents of nationalizing the militia disputed the advantages of increased training, standardization of organization and equipment (although some questions arose later in Congress), or providing realistic procedures for enforcement. It is true that the plans advanced in public in the 1780s by Friedrich Steuben and by Henry Knox were extreme. Steuben advocated abolition of all state

¹⁶ For the various plans advanced in 1783 see the documents cited in note 2 above and John Paterson to George Washington, April 16, 1783, and Frederick Steuben to George Washington, April 21, 1783, both in the Washington Papers; Jedidiah Huntington to George Washington, April 16, 1783, in Jared Sparks, ed., *Correspondence of the American Revolution . . . Letters to George Washington* (Boston, 1853), IV, 278; William Heath to George Washington, April 17, 1783, *The Heath Papers* (Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, 7th series, volume V, Boston, 1905), 386-388; Rufus Putnam to George Washington, 1783, in Rowena Buell, ed., *The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam . . .* (Boston, 1903), 198-215; George Clinton to George Washington, April 1783, in the *Public Papers of George Clinton* (New York, 1899-1914), VII, 144-147; Edward Hand, "On a Peace Establishment," 1783, in the Edward Hand Papers, Peter Force Transcripts, Library of Congress. See also Benjamin Lincoln's report to Congress, March 3, 1783, and his letter to Alexander Hamilton *et al.*, May 1783, both in the Papers of the Continental Congress, item 38, Record Group 360, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; the two plans dated 1783 in the F.W.A. Steuben Papers, New York Historical Society, New York, New York; Steuben's *A Letter on the Subject of an Established Militia, and Military Establishments . . .* (New York, 1784); and Alexander Hamilton, "Report on a Military Peace Establishment," May-June 1783, Syrett *et al.*, *Papers of Hamilton*, III, 378-397.

¹⁷ See the laws in Lt. Col. Arthur Vollmer, comp., *Military Obligation: The American Tradition. A Compilation of the Enactments of Compulsion From the Earliest Settlements . . . Through the Articles of Confederation, 1789* (Backgrounds of Selective Service, Special Monograph No. 1, Volume II, Washington, 1947), part 2 (Conn.), 250-263, part 3 (Del.), 26-35, part 4 (Ga.), 141-152, part 6 (Mass.), 261-267, part 11 (Pa.), 116-123, part 13 (S.C.), 102-104, part 14 (Va.), 422-440.

authority and reduction of the forces to 25,000 continentally enlisted volunteers. Knox called for classing, with enough training to make the total annual expense unbearably large. But for the future the nation needed armies that could fight outside state boundaries, garrison the frontiers, and defeat the Indian or European adversaries. Clearly the old colonial militias, a patchwork hodgepodge of indifferently prepared and haphazardly armed units, were unsuitable legally and militarily. Their future in the defense system of the United States rested upon reform.

* * * * *

The first obstacles to reform that the nationalists faced in the 1780s were the ambiguity in the Articles of Confederation about Congress's ability to raise peacetime armies and the unmistakably clear absence of any congressional authority over the militias. In the constitutional convention nationalists moved resolutely to overcome those barriers. On the question of army power, opposition was negligible except for Elbridge Gerry, who almost singlehandedly had blocked the creation of a national establishment in 1784. The militia question sparked a fierce exchange. When Virginian George Mason moved to allow Congress "to regulate the militia," a power included in several plans of union before the convention, several delegates pointed out that the states would never assent to their own disarmament.¹⁸ "They would pine away to nothing after such a sacrifice of power," objected Oliver Ellsworth.¹⁹ Gerry was adamant. "[T]his [was] the last point remaining to be surrendered"; if adopted, "the plan will have as black a mark as was set on Cain."²⁰

As so often happened in the convention, the delegates quickly put together a compromise that allowed state and national governments to share authority over the militia, just as they jointly exercised the taxing power. The Committee of Eleven offered a clause permitting Congress "[t]o make laws for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the States . . . the appointing of the Officers, and . . . training . . . according to the discipline prescribed" by the central government.²¹ Again a bitter fight erupted over the extent of national control. According to Rufus King of the committee, "organizing" meant specifying the size and composition of units, "arming" meant stipulating

¹⁸ James Madison's notes, August 18, 1787, in Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention*, II, 326. Earlier suggestions in the convention for putting the militia under national direction are in *ibid.*, I, 293, II, 136.

¹⁹ James Madison's notes, August 18, 1787, *ibid.*, II, 331.

²⁰ James Madison's notes, August 18, 1787, *ibid.*, 332.

²¹ Journal of the convention, August 21, 1787, *ibid.*, 352.

the weapons, and "disciplining" meant "prescribing the manual[,] exercise[,] evolutions, etc."²² Gerry saw through that interpretation immediately: "[A] system of Despotism," he charged, "making the States drill-sergeants."²³ Yet neither Gerry nor other dissenters could block nationalists who demanded uniformity and reform or Southerners who wanted a strengthened militia for internal purposes and to protect their open frontiers. At one point James Madison suggested that the states be limited to the appointment of officers below the rank of general, but that went too far even for many nationalists.²⁴ In the end the convention adopted the committee's recommendation and, along with provisions for federalizing the militia under the President as commander in chief, gave the federal government substantial new military power.

What appeared on the surface to be a nationalist victory (and was on the military sections generally) was in reality the first step toward the eventual demise of the militia reform movement. As bitter fights in Congress for the next decade would testify, the convention never defined adequately the powers of the states and of Congress. New Hampshire's John Langdon had warned his fellow delegates about "the confusion of the different authorities on this subject," but most in the convention, wanting to nationalize the militia but apprehensive about the reaction in the coming fight over ratification, evidently preferred to leave the government's powers open to interpretation.²⁵ For the next 10 years at least, a conflicting welter of local interests, personal views, and partisan disagreements, all played out against a background of strife over national and state jurisdiction, was destined to stymie legislation which could strengthen the militia system. The Constitution was merely the first step, as Gouverneur Morris knew when he pressed Washington to accept the presidency. "No Constitution is the same on Paper and in Life."²⁶

* * * * *

President Washington first began to press Congress about militia reorganization a few months after taking office, but other business prevented the congressional committee from drafting legislation. Before the next session started, the President studied various European and American systems and forwarded his ideas to Secretary of War Knox, who then worked them into a revision of his 1786 plan and submitted the final product to Congress. The Knox plan of 1790 was the culmination of nationalist

²² James Madison's notes, August 23, 1787, *ibid.*, 385.

²³ James Madison's notes, August 23, 1787, *ibid.*, 385.

²⁴ James Madison's notes, August 23, 1787, *ibid.*, 388.

²⁵ James Madison's notes, August 18, 1787, *ibid.*, 331.

²⁶ Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, October 30, 1787, in the Washington Papers.

thinking on ways to transform state forces into "powerful" and "energetic" armies. The central ideas were classing and nationalization. An "advanced corps" of 18 to 20 year-olds would attend 30-day "camps of discipline" (the 20-year-olds would attend 10 days only), where, "remote from . . . the vices of populous places," they would learn the trade of war. Afterwards they would pass into a "main corps" (21 to 45-year-olds) to form a reserve pool from which armies would be drawn for war and which, while mustered only four times yearly, would maintain its efficiency by the "constant accession" of well trained youth. (The oldest group would muster twice yearly and would act as a home guard against invasion.) Furthermore, Knox proposed division of all companies into 12-man sections so that federal authorities could draft individuals for as long as 3 years if enough volunteers did not come forward in an emergency. Naturally the federal government specified a single, uniform organization and would oversee all training. And in a major reversal designed to insure military readiness, all arms, equipment, and clothing would come from federal supplies—even pay for the men on bivouac. To deal with the problems of enforcement and exemptions Knox proposed to do away with fines and to make graduation from the advanced corps a prerequisite to "exercising any of the rights of a free citizen." While he accepted exemptions in principle, "measures of national importance never should be frustrated for accommodation of individuals."¹⁷

Congress and the public greeted the administration's plan with shock and disbelief. It is "so palpably absurd and impolitic," reacted DeWitt Clinton, "that I take it for granted it will meet with no success."¹⁸ Obviously Knox wanted complete nationalization of the militias with the states left merely to appoint officers and arrange exemptions. Even state inspectors, quartermasters, and adjutant generals would be required to report to federal officials. The administration probably phrased its recommendations in extreme terms in hopes that after debate and compromise Congress still would accept major changes in the system. But nearly every aspect of Knox's plan brought heavy criticism: the expense, estimated at 400,000 dollars yearly; classing, which would take apprentices and young laborers away from employment for a month every year; the bivouacs, which some felt would militarize the nation and corrupt youth; the stingy exemption policy that was so blatantly anti-Quaker that one congressman refused to send the plan to the printer lest Quakers desert the

¹⁷ For Knox's plan see the *Annals of Congress*, 1 Cong., 2 sess. (1789-1790), 2088-2107.

¹⁸ DeWitt Clinton to Charles Clinton, February 8, 1790, in the Miscellaneous Collection, New York Historical Society.

Federalist party. "There are a number of opinions," Knox learned from a Massachusetts friend, "all tend[ing] to damn it."²⁹

For the next 2 years Congress struggled to produce a national law and in the process stripped away every meaningful proposal for reform. In the wake of the hostile reaction to Knox's plan a congressional committee weakened classing, reinstituted the old fine system, and changed the arming provision back to individual militiamen supplying their own equipment. The only tough sections remaining in the draft legislation were administrative: the addition of state adjutants, commissaries of military stores, and presidentially appointed inspectors to attend regimental musters and direct training. In July, 1790, the House cautiously had the bill printed in order to test public reaction. Like nearly all the proposals for change, the new bill pleased few, including some of its authors. "I do not look upon it [as] a very perfect system," admitted George Thacher, a member of the committee. "[E]very time I run it over, I think I can point out imperfections."³⁰

In truth, the idea of a national system made most congressmen very uncomfortable. Any law, no matter what the benefit to the country as a

²⁹ Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, February 21, 1790, in the Henry Knox Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. For other reactions see Benjamin Goodhue to Stephen Phillips, January 25, 1790, in the Phillips Family Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society; Henry Wynkoop to Reading Beattie, January 21, 1790, in Joseph M. Beatty, Jr., ed., "The Letters of Judge Henry Wynkoop . . .," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXVIII (1914), 187; James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, January 24, 1790, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, 1950-), XVI, 125; James Madison to _____, February 2, 1790, in the Roberts Autograph Collection, Haverford College Library, Haverford, Pennsylvania; William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, February 2, 1790, and March 8, 1790, in the Benjamin Huntington Papers, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, Rhode Island; J[oseph?] B. V[arnum?] to [George Thacher?], February 7, 1790, in the George Thacher Papers, Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts; William Irvine to John Nicholson, February 21, 1790, in the Simon Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Edward Carrington to James Madison, March 2, 1790, in the James Madison Papers, New York Public Library; Paine Wingate to Timothy Pickering, March 7, 1790, in Charles E. L. Wingate, *Life and Letters of Paine Wingate* (Medford, Mass., 1930), II, 353; Henry Van Schaack to Theodore Sedgwick, March 10, 1790, in the Theodore Sedgwick Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; "A Mechanic," in the Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, March 17, 1790; John Quincy Adams to John Adams, April 5, 1790, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams* (New York, 1913-1917), I, 54; William Maclay journal, April 16, 1790, in Charles A. Beard, ed., *The Journal of William Maclay* . . . (New York, 1927), 235.

³⁰ George Thacher to General Goodwin, July 8, 1790, in the Thacher Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. The bill was printed in the Philadelphia *Gazette of the United States*, July 14, 1790, July 17, 1790, July 21, 1790.

whole, might tread severely on local interests and very likely would preclude needed local variations in organization or equipment. In towns classing hurt tradesmen who employed apprentices. In the South a uniform tactical structure might make impossible extra cavalry units for slave patrol. The expense of a national system, especially federal arming and training, seemed huge. Quakers mounted a potent lobby against a strong system fearing that any law out of Philadelphia, which was then the capital city, might prevent exemptions for reason of conscience. As Rhode Island's senators openly admitted, every voter would feel the effect of more training and stiffer fines or would view the schedule of exemptions with jealousy.³¹ Many senators and representatives, themselves veterans or active in the militia, had pet theories as to changes needed or desired. Lurking in the background lay the explosive question of just how far federal authority actually extended over the state forces.

The first extensive debate in December, 1790, in part the product of General Josiah Harmar's defeat at the hands of the Indians in Ohio and the President's continual prodding, reflected the jumble of interests and opinions. Every provision in the bill was dissected and disputed—"too much into the minutiae of the business," complained one congressman; "puerile," snapped Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut.³² Gradually, inexorably, every strong provision was stripped away to satisfy the chorus of conflicting views. Erased was classing, opposed by several Federalists because it discriminated against tradesmen and by others because young men might live so scattered about the countryside as to make their mustering impossible. Federal inspectors were transferred to state control in order to avoid expense and because the Constitution seemed to mandate that all militia appointments be made by the states exclusively. After 10 days the bill was, in Trumbull's words, "so mutilated, maimed, & murdered" that the House appointed a committee to prepare another draft, but the new version solved little. Quakers in Philadelphia and in Rhode Island intensified their opposition to any specification of exemptions.³³

³¹ Joseph Stanton and Theodore Foster to the Governor of Rhode Island, February 17, 1790, in the Governor's Correspondence, Rhode Island State Archives.

³² Timothy Bloodworth in the *Annals of Congress*, 1 Cong., 3 sess. (1790-1791), 1817; Jonathan Trumbull to William Williams, December 25, 1790, in the Autograph Collection, Harvard University Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

³³ See Benjamin Bourn to Moses Brown, December 25, 1790, and January 12, 1791, both in the Moses Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island; James Pemberton to Moses Brown and Thomas Arnold, January 19, 1791, in the Almy-Brown Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society; various constituents to Theodore Foster, January, 1791, Theodore Foster Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society.

Knowledgeable observers predicted that Congress would not produce any legislation in the foreseeable future.³⁴

In December, 1791, news of General Arthur St. Clair's defeat in Ohio rocked the capital. With the regular army annihilated and the President without authority to mobilize the militia or to reimburse militiamen called out by state officials, the frontiers were all but naked.³⁵ To meet the threat the administration proposed a 5,000 man army, the third request for more regulars in 3 years.³⁶ Never was the tradeoff between reform of the militia and a national military establishment more clearcut, nor was the need for a militia law more desperate. As the President told Senator Benjamin Hawkins, who opposed the administration's western military program, "No man wishes less that the P_____ to see a stand[ing] army established; but if Congress will not Exact a proper Militia law (Not such a milk and water thing as I expect to see if I ever see any) Defence and the Garrisons will always require some Troops." ³⁷ Republican James Monroe agreed. "Anything is preferable to nothing as it takes away one of the arguments for a standing army." ³⁸ In February, 1792, discussion began anew on the weakened congressional bill. This time debate hinged on the extent of national control, the most divisive issue and one increasingly central to the emerging party struggle. Opponents attempted to block every assertion of national authority; at one point they moved to abandon the requirement for uniform caliber muskets. Finally, in order to

³⁴ William Smith to Otho H. Williams, December, 1790, in the Otho H. Williams Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland; Edward Carrington to James Madison, February 2, 1791, in the James Madison Papers, Library of Congress; George Thacher to William Wedgery, November 11, 1791, in the Thacher Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. For the debate see the *Annals of Congress*, 1 Cong., 3 sess. (1790-1791), 1804-1828, 1837, 1840.

³⁵ Under the act of March 3, 1791 (*Annals of Congress*, 1 Cong., 3 sess. [1790-1791], 2351), the President could "engage a body to serve as cavalry" and, if a new regiment could not be recruited "in time to prosecute such military operations as exigencies" required, he could substitute an equal number of militia. The authorization obviously was meant to be temporary and, except for cavalry, limited to less than a thousand militia. Knox pointed out the lack of proper mobilization procedures when preparing temporary defense measures. He told the President that the only alternative was to request the governors of exposed states to call out the militia themselves. See Henry Knox to George Washington, January 1, 1792, in the Washington Papers.

³⁶ For the administration's military program, see Walter Lowrie and Matthew Clarke, eds., *American State Papers . . . , Indian Affairs* (Washington, 1832-1861), I, 197-202.

³⁷ George Washington, "Errors of Government Towards the Indians," February, 1792, in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, XXXI, 494. The letter from Benjamin Hawkins to George Washington, February 10, 1792, is in Elizabeth G. McPherson, ed., "Unpublished Letters from North Carolinians to Washington," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XII (1935), 162-165.

³⁸ James Monroe to Archibald Stuart, March 14, 1792, in the James Monroe Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia

achieve any agreement at all, Congress struck out every controversial provision, heeding the reasoning of Elias Boudinot (who pleaded at the outset that "a plan of conciliation alone would every procure . . . a militia bill") to make "the law . . . very simple in its construction, and refer to as few objects as possible."³⁹

In the end the Uniform Militia Act passed in 1792 (and signed by the President at the last possible moment, undoubtedly to register his disgust) was so weak that many Federalists could not bear to support it. Gone was every vestige of the reforms that nationalists and Federalists had advocated for a decade: classing, increased training, and guarantees of uniformity. The law contained no fines, no officials specially charged with upgrading standards or reporting to the federal government, and no procedures for insuring a national system. Militiamen (all men aged 16 to 45) were to arm and to equip themselves; states were to adopt the tactical organization prescribed if "convenient"; and training was to conform to Steuben's wartime manual unless "unavoidable circumstances" dictated otherwise. If the states or individuals ignored the law, the government was powerless to intercede.⁴⁰

Almost universally, contemporaries viewed the act as unsound and inadequate. State laws passed to implement it contained tremendous variations in unit structure, fines, and numbers of musters.⁴¹ After his legislature had wrestled with the statute, Federalist Senator Charles Carroll of Carrollton concluded that, "Never . . . did a body of wise men pass so mischievous an act."⁴² Every Congress for the next 30 years at-

³⁹ Elias Boudinot in *Annals of Congress*, 2 Cong., 1 sess. (1791-1792), 419.

⁴⁰ The law is in *ibid.*, 2 Cong., 1 sess. (1791-1792), 1392-1395. Debate in the House, Senate action, and the voting can be followed in *ibid.*, 2 Cong., 1 sess. (1791-1792), 103, 104, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 122-123, 128, 418-424, 432, 433, 435, 436, 552-553, 577, 578-579. The House vote was 31 to 27 and did not follow any sectional or party pattern. Staunch Federalists like Fisher Ames, Theodore Sedgwick, and Elias Boudinot voted for it, as did nearly all the anti-administration Virginians like Madison and Abraham Venable. Opponents included important Federalists like Jeremiah Wadsworth and George Thacher, as well as administration enemies William Findley, Nathaniel Macon, and Thomas Sumter. A more complete account of the drafting of the law is Richard H. Fraser, "The Foundations of American Military Policy, 1783-1800" (doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1959), 259-284. See also Howard White, *Executive Influence in Determining Military Policy in the United States* (*University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences*, XII, Urbana, 1924), 92-93; Mahon, *American Militia*, 17-18.

⁴¹ Fraser, "American Military Policy," 299-330, 451-452.

⁴² Charles Carroll of Carrollton to John Henry, December 3, 1792, and December 23, 1792, both in Kate Mason Rowland, *The Life of Charles Carroll . . .* (New York, 1898), 11, 190, 193-194. For other expressions, see the debates in the *Annals of Congress*, 2 Cong., 2 sess. (1792-1793), 701-702, 708-711, 3 Cong., 2 sess. (1794-1795), 1067-1071, 1214-1220, 1233-1237, 4 Cong., 2 sess. (1796-1797), 1675-1691, 2223-2224, 5 Cong., 1 sess. (1797), 340-341, 642, 5 Cong., 2 sess. (1797-1798), 1384-1386, 1524-1525, 1559-1560, 1772-1773, 6 Cong., 1 sess. (1799-1800), 201-523.

tempted to strengthen it, but even in the aftermath of the Whiskey Rebellion, when Secretary Knox reported that the War Department had been forced to furnish two-thirds of the men mobilized with arms and Congressman Samuel Smith, who had commanded the Maryland contingent in the march to Pittsburgh, berated his colleagues with tales of the troops' dismal performance (in response to one order to load, fifty men had "put down the ball before the charge of powder"), Congress could not agree on another law.⁴³ Because of the pressure of Harmar's and St. Clair's defeats, Congress had been forced to fulfill its duty to implement the militia provision of the Constitution.⁴⁴ True reform could have cost tens of thousands annually, forced changes that the states did not want, worked hardships on special groups, and increased the burden on individual voters. No one could agree on fines, exemptions, whether training camps would school youth to defend the country or debauch their morals, or whether nationalization would revitalize or destroy the system. As the party struggle hardened, the disagreement over the extent of congressional authority grew more heated and partisan. Federalist military theoreticians might want classing, but party stalwarts from seaboard constituencies saw difficulties for their towns. Some Federalists undoubtedly realized that a weak militia would enhance the need for a strong military establishment. Republican Senator William Maclay accused Knox of proposing a purposely extreme plan in 1790, knowing that it could never pass and thus forcing Congress to accept a standing army.⁴⁵ Republicans might wish to improve the militia in order to avert a military establishment, but too many in the party wanted to keep federal budgets small and federal authority over the states at a minimum. As Dwight Foster explained in 1795 after a long and fruitless debate over revising the law, "this is a subject which affects the various Interests of Individuals in every part of the United States and consequently many great and various are the Sentiments and opinions which are formed by different persons on Questions of this Nature."⁴⁶

⁴³ Henry Knox to the Speaker of the House, with enclosure, December 10, 1794, in the *Annals of Congress*, 3 Cong., 2 sess. (1794-1795), 1396-1399; Samuel Smith in *ibid.*, 3 Cong., 2 sess. (1794-1795), 1069. In *The Volunteer Soldier of America* . . . (Chicago and New York, 1887), 164-165, John A. Logan stated that "almost every session" from 1794 to 1819 considered revising the 1792 act.

⁴⁴ Knox also estimated that three-quarters of the nation's militiamen lacked arms.

⁴⁵ A good example of the way this pressure worked was North Carolinian William Barry Grove's comment that the law "is not altogether what I could wish, but the necessity in my opinion of having some general principles for the States to act on induced me to give my assent. I am persuaded if We had had a Militia Law in existence so many Regular Troops would not have been needed to defend the frontier from a Set of Naked Indians." To Governor Alexander Martin, March 17, 1792, in the *Governors's Papers*, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

⁴⁶ William Maclay journal, April 16, 1790, in Bear J., ed., *Journal of Maclay*, 235.

⁴⁷ Dwight Foster journal, February 17, 1795, Dwight Foster Papers, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

With the passage of the 1792 act and the failure of the reform movement, the colonial militia system continued to decline as a viable military force until it finally passed into oblivion, in ridicule and disorganization, before the Civil War.⁴⁶ Ironically, those who had opposed increasing federal military powers were in part responsible for the ultimate triumph of the national government in military affairs. But it was also true that once the mantle of the British Army had been removed by independence, the old militia system of universal service and state control could not provide alone for America's military security. The new nation needed coordinated, trained armies commanded by skilled officers and equipped with standard arms and equipment—forces that would respond to the will of a central government, fight outside a particular state or overseas, and stay abreast of changes in warfare and technology. The leaders of the Continental Army and many nationalists recognized the problem as early as 1783, and as would happen often after American wars, military programs were proposed that proved unacceptable for essentially political reasons.

And yet by 1800, after a decade of Indian conflict, rebellion in Pennsylvania, a war scare with Britain and a Quasi-war with France, and the smashing triumph of France's new legions across the face of Europe, some of the militia's most fervent champions began to realize that even citizen soldiers must be well trained and that the defense of the Republic must be managed with efficiency by a single authority. "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists," declared Thomas Jefferson in his inaugural ad-

⁴⁶ With the exception of Jim Dan Hill in *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1964), 9-10, military analysts and historians have emphasized the weakness of the 1792 act. See Prevet Major General Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (62 Cong., 2 sess., Senate Document No. 4941, Washington, 1912), 85; John McAuley Palmer, *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization* (New Haven, 1941), 50-53; Walter Millis, *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History* (New York, 1956), 30-52; Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., *The Civilian and the Military* (New York, 1956), 33-35; Fraser, "American Military Policy," 449-462; T. Harry Williams, *Americans at War: The Development of the American Military System* (Baton Rouge, La., 1960), 18-19; C. Joseph Bernardo and Eugene H. Bacon, *American Military Policy: Its Development Since 1775* (2d ed., Harrisburg, Pa., 1961), 77-82; Mahon, *American Militia*, 18-21; Russell F. Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York and London, 1962), 20-21; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York and London, 1967), 93-94. The best description of the militia's decline in the early nineteenth century is Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston and Toronto, 1968), chapters 6 and 7. See also William H. Riker, *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy* (Washington, 1957), chapter III; Paul Tincher Smith, "Militia of the United States from 1865 to 1860," in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, XV (1919), 20-47; and a typical local study, Anthony Marro, "Vermont's Local Militia Units, 1815-1860," in *Vermont History*, XL (1972), 28-42.

dress. Nowhere did Jefferson prove the point more clearly than in a statement which, because it revealed a consensus on the role of militia, marked the true epitaph for those institutions in the American defense system "a well disciplined militia," proclaimed the new President, "our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, *till regulars may relieve them.*"⁴⁷***

⁴⁷ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801, in James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington, 1896-1899), I, 323.

***Emphasis added.

COMMENTARY

DON HIGGINBOTHAM

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Since our time is short this morning and I can see that a number of you are eager to get at our speakers—I can see that Clyde Ferguson, and Bill Holley, and Ted Ropp, Don Gerlach and others are chafing at the bit—I will abbreviate my remarks. Incidentally, you North Carolinians in particular may be interested to know that the bit of sage knowledge on the subject of American farmboys being able to repel Hitler's legions with their squirrel rifles came from old Senator Bob Reynolds. Sam Irvin comes by his homespun wisdom honestly. Let me now put on my second cap, albeit briefly.

In some measure, both papers deal with the irregular side of conflict in the Revolution. The first considers the immediate war-time effects, the second treats the long-range effects on American military policy. Professor Calhoun is concerned with the Loyalist views of what kind of a war it was, or at any rate what kind of a war it should become for Britain to win it. Loyalists saw it as a harsh, grim, unrelenting struggle with no holds barred in which the Whig civilian population should be made to suffer for its sins. Britain, of course, never committed herself entirely to that concept, although Calhoun correctly indicates that there was, in his words, a British willingness to see the armed conflict as a geopolitical process and to experiment with appropriate ways of dealing with an unprecedented military challenge.

For the most part, though, Britain did not change, partly because eighteenth-century methods and attitudes about warfare ran contrary to what Calhoun calls "internal war." One recalls the remark of Franklin and Mary Wickwire in their biography of Cornwallis that his Lordship was too much the gentleman, the aristocrat of honor and principle, to engage in a scorched earth policy or a hangman's harvest. Despite the possible disagreement by some South Carolina Whigs, the Wickwires may be right, but I do not believe that Britain changed fundamentally, nor does Professor Calhoun.

The Loyalists were different, not merely because of their suffering and their bitterness, nor because it was for many of them a brothers' war, but also because they were Americans. They were products of the New World environment where cruelty and savagery had been commonplace in colonial confrontations with the French, Spanish, and Indians. Men such

as Guy Johnson, John Connally, Joseph Brandy, John Butler, and Thomas Brown were willing to pull out all the stops. Yet even their strategy involved a massive British commitment in troops to sustain the Loyalists and to bring about pacification. This was a commitment that Whitehall could not or would not meet. On the other hand, American military mythology of the Revolution, as ably discussed by Professor Kohn, held that the sort of totality desired by the Loyalists did not take place: distressing the countryside, seizing and punishing rebel leaders, living off plunder, as Calhoun quotes Patrick Ferguson on the subject—practices all too common with revolutionary wars whether we call them partisan, or civil, or something else. But according to the Whig mythology they did not happen only because of the activities of the Whig militia, the fearless patriots who rushed from their fields and forges to repel the Tories. The Tories were the enemies within, assisted at times by their British allies.

During the debates on American military policy in 1783, 1787, 1788, 1790, and 1792, the Ethan Allens, the John Starks, the Thomas Sumters, and the Elijah Clarks provided Americans with the evidence of how to secure the post-war defense and fight their future wars. Consequently, standing armies were unnecessary in peace, if not in war, as was close federal control of the militia. Had it been necessary during the Revolution to place the stalwarts of George Rogers Clark under Congress instead of under Virginia, the "Swamp Rats" of Francis Marion under distant authority instead of under their local chieftain, the King's Mountain men of Isaac Shelby and John Sevier under any responsibility other than what they owed to their fellow Watauga settlers? The Patriots had fought fire with fire and they were the better fire fighters. However, if the Revolution never became the type of struggle desired by the Loyalists, then the militia could not have done all that was claimed for them, although their accomplishments are not to be ignored.

Let us now raise a few specific questions about each paper. They need not be fully answered here, but some of them the authors may want to keep in mind as they pursue their investigations. Calhoun makes frequent reference to the tensions that existed in Revolutionary society. Recently Gordon Wood, Jack Greene, and others have asked whether such tensions were increasing or decreasing by the eve of the Revolution. Perhaps for a different reason many years ago the Progressive historians who wrote about the third and fourth quarters of the eighteenth century saw strain and divisions in the domestic sector. At times it is not clear whether it is Calhoun, or the Loyalists, or both who see society becoming "dysfunctional," a word that is now popular with social historians. It may well be that the activities of the Loyalists cast some light on this historiographical

problem. Calhoon could help us by explaining more precisely these societal views of the King's Friends.

Let me raise a further question about pacification which might well have been attempted in New Jersey, South Carolina, and Georgia on a meaningful scale. Was it always seen by the Loyalists, if not by the British, as an administering of strong medicine? Certainly it is a contrast from recent warfare where pacification has meant an attempt to win over the countryside with promises of a better life, of achieving more than one's foes can offer. I gather that Calhoon feels that this was somewhat the approach used by Galloway in Philadelphia, but how successful was it? Was it ever repeated, or even contemplated, in the so-called garrison towns or on a colony-wide basis?

Allow me two or three brief comments about Professor Kohn's paper, which might be grouped under the heading, "Who really murdered the militia?" If it is possible, we need to know more about Congressional attitudes between 1790 and 1792. There is a tantalizing implication that the Federalists may have favored the strong militia laws, knowing that they would be defeated, in order to create an excuse for Congress to enact some sort of meaningful standing army legislation. If Kohn knows more about that, it would be interesting to hear it. Certainly if this was the thinking of the Federalists and the Nationalists, it was quite a gamble. If you cannot get Congress to adopt a strong militia law, how are you going to get it to adopt a meaningful standing army?

We also must consider the question, was the militia really murdered? If it was murdered, the implication is that it must have been viable at one time. But when was the militia ever viable as an institution? This is perhaps the best time to throw a few bouquets at John Shy, in return for similar services. If you will recall his seminal article that appeared in *William and Mary Quarterly* in 1963, he raised some interesting questions as to whether the militia ever had been a viable institution in the colonial period. I do not think that you could have convinced Washington or Knox that it was ever viable during the Revolution. It certainly was not in the Confederation period. What was there to murder?

Professor Kohn says that the militia declined as an institution. Maybe this is so. He mentions some persuasive evidence in Marcus Cunliffe's *Soldiers and Civilians*. You also find, it seems to me, other types of evidence in that book indicating that the militia lived on at least as a viable tradition in terms of ideas, concepts, and attitudes, if not as a viable institution. Maybe this was what the militia had been all along. It was an attitude of mind rather than a viable institution. It may well be that this

period was a turning point in the history of the militia, but to be totally convinced of that I would have to know more about the militia and about its role and status as an institution before that time.

DISCUSSION

Lieutenant Colonel JOHN NAPIER, USAF (Ret.) (Air University Command Historian): I have a question for Professor Kohn. I wonder if it is possible that the militia was, in fact, reformed by a kind of informal classing that you suggest General Knox had proposed? What I have in mind is the growth of the volunteer corps as part of the militia, but really apart from it—the elite units like the Richmond Light Infantry Blues, the Chatham Light Artillery, and the Veteran Corps of Artillery in New York. I have done a little research on such units in Montgomery, Alabama, after the Creek War of 1836, and I would suggest that they were very functional, quite popular and effective.

KOHN: You make a very good point. The problem with saying that the militia was reformed in part by the advent of the volunteer companies is to say that the volunteer companies were the same as the classing in the minds of Federalist reformers in the 1780s and 1790s; and very definitely it was not in their minds. The volunteer companies were elite groups. When those volunteer companies in 1798 were made part of the provisional army able to be mobilized by the president without any other authority, the Republicans claimed that it was creating a rich man's internal force to hold the population in check. Now if you think of militia as fighting people's wars, I wonder whether the Richmond Light Blues would be capable of fighting such wars. In other words, to reform the militia you have to produce large numbers of people across the social structure of society, and you have to produce them on other than a volunteer basis. It has to be compulsory, and that was the heart of the reform plans.

GEORGE BILLIAS (Clark University): I want to comment on the two papers if I may, and then perhaps ask a question of both speakers. I think that Professor Calhoun is to be applauded for his courage in tackling the core of the problem that we are discussing here: the conceptual problem of defining and systematizing what kinds of wars are being fought. We now realize that it was not one war. There were a series of wars and, in fact, there were a series of strategies. I also agree with Calhoun's use of Eckstein's concept of internal war, which I think probably will bring us ultimately closer to the truth.

My question is this: in the interaction between the British commanders, who are in a sense high society, and the lower-class Loyalists, who are proletarian, to what degree do class attitudes enter into the discussions of strategy and/or affect the acceptance of lower class suggestions by upper-class commanders?

As far as Professor Kohn is concerned, once again I am persuaded by his thesis that the Federalists were, for a long time, committed to the erection of a national military establishment. This was a goal that they fought for single-mindedly for a long period of time, and it seems to me that they finally pulled it off. Jefferson capitulated in ideology by conceding that we needed to have a national army. My question for Kohn is this: were the nationalists motivated more by ideology, their desire to centralize military powers in the new nation, or were they motivated by the shocking military reality of the severe defeats of two American armies led by Harmer and St. Clair?

CALHOON: My impression is that most of the recorded discussions between Loyalists and British commanders about how to fight the war were at a very high level. They were wealthy Loyalists who elbowed their way to get the ear of the British commanders. At the same time, there was a very short distance between them and the lower-class, much more violent kind of Loyalist rank and file. There is a great question to be answered now about the Loyalists: what was the social composition of the armed Loyalist units? Not having done that research, I do not know. But the ideology which recurs in Loyalist writings about the war is the need to make war an instrument of vengeance. This provides a kind of common denominator between wealthy landowners and the lower-class Loyalist rabble. They had a common language in which they could talk both to each other and to the British officials. So that was my only guess about the relationship between them. The subject of class interests is most interesting.

WIN: The question, I think, is were the nationalists motivated more by political and ideological considerations or by military realities? At the risk of some oversimplification of the complexity of their thinking, I would say that their primary motivation was political and ideological, because that is the way military policy fit into their grander vision of what the United States was to become. But that is not to say that military realities were not very closely intertwined. Their primary motivation was political; therefore, when faced with a military problem, they reacted along the lines that fit their political motivation. The leadership of the Federalist Party, especially in the Executive Branch of the 1790s, was almost like George Washington's military family—Henry Knox, Alexander Hamilton, Edmond Randolph, James McHenry. These things are so integrated and dove-tailed in their minds that you cannot really separate them, but I would say that the over-arching consideration was political.

JOSEPH R. GOLDMAN (Army Command and General Staff College): Professor Calhoon, I was following your analysis of the Loyalist trend toward either civil, partisan, or revolutionary war, and from what I understand it is basically three strands of the same role. In the minds of many

Loyalists, especially along the frontiers in the Ohio and the New York Valley, did the introduction of the French in 1778 as a viable military force raise the spectre of the same horrors of the French and Indian Wars that had been fought in the 1750s and 1760s to the point that there was greater resistance by these people than would have been the case if only British propaganda and American depredations had been involved?

CALHOON: Yes, this certainly worked as a powerful propaganda device, and it was obviously a very deep and real fear. But the thing which comes to mind from the Loyalist writings is not only the evil nature of a French enemy, but the unreliable nature of the French alliance. The fact that the French would be likely to pull out at any minute, out of self-interest, seemed to them to be a stronger reason to hope for British victory.

Captain JOHN MARSHALL, USA (ROTC, Southern Colorado State College): I am troubled somewhat by the artificial division between militia and regular forces. Professor Kohn may recall that in the opening years of the American Revolution there was a class militia in Virginia called the Culpepper Minutemen that was trained in excess of the normal militia training. Many of those militia units moved almost man for man into the Continental lines and served in the northern campaigns. By making such a clearcut distinction between militia and regular, we tend to ignore the fact that basic military training seems to have been received in the militia. Many of the regular regiments drew their strength from that prior militia training and many of the militia regiments rendered good service in the opening years of the war. Therefore, the militia was not exactly a dead institution in colonial America.

KOHN: I think that we have to make the essential distinction between partial mobilization in a coming military crisis and long-range, peacetime military policy. Yes, there were minutemen before the Revolution. Yes, all through the colonial period colonial authorities tinkered with the militia system to prepare it for whatever military crisis was coming. But what we are talking about after the Revolution is long-time military policy and classing on a continuing basis. Those "camps of discipline" called for thirty days service each year in the national guard; today they ask for half that much.

Second, nothing confused Americans of the Revolutionary generation and after more than the distinction between a regular soldier in America and a soldier of the classic European standing army. I have to agree with Baron Steuben that the latter type was an impossible creation in America. You could not produce an army made up of a real aristocratic officer corps and a real peasant scum soldiery. Americans did not know

what a regular was. When they stopped to think about it, their only conclusion was that a regular was that same kind of person that shot down the civilians on King Street in 1770. In their minds a militia man no matter how he was trained, became transformed by a military crisis. He became as good as any regular soldier as soon as he enlisted for a stated term and sold his soul to a governmental authority.

The Fourth Session
GENERALSHIP AND SOLDIERSHIP

OPENING REMARKS

Lieutenant Colonel DAVID MacISAAC (USAF Academy): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. After 4 years, it is once again my honor to introduce to you the chairman of the Friday afternoon session—an honor that I cannot help suspecting has something to do with my miserable failure in this role in 1970 when, instead of taking out a few moments to gather my thoughts, I spent the noon hour dashing about the local area with Phil Crowl and Dick Challenger trying to find some place quiet where we could allow Phil a few moments to practice reading William Appleman William's paper which had arrived on the station, as best I recall, at precisely 1203 hours. While Professor Crowl looked on the whole business as just a typical case of the Marine Corps bailing out the Air Force at the last minute, I suddenly found myself standing here with a blank piece of paper and only my undying admiration for our chairman to save me from catastrophe.

Professor Ropp comes to us once again from Duke University where he has been teaching since 1938, and where, in the course of his other duties, he has been turning out new scholars year after year at such a rate as to lead "the Princeton crowd"—of which, by the way, my boss is one—to refer to them publicly as "The Duke Mafia." Professor Ropp's contributions to scholarship are well known, most particularly through his book, *War in the Modern World*, but also for his work at the Naval War College, at Carlisle Barracks, with the American Military Institute, and as the 1970 Harmon Memorial Lecturer in Military History. Perhaps his greatest contribution, however, has been the military history program at Duke where he never has failed to take advantage of the entire resources of the faculties both at Duke and Chapel Hill to make a lasting contribution to scholarship. Finally, he is the only man I know who could sit at David's Delicatessen across from the Geary Theater in San Francisco, down a breakfast of corn beef and eggs, catch every flaw in a program outline such as this one, and then suggest the precise cure, whether of conception or personality, as he did last December while Charlotte and I took notes as rapidly as we could. Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Theodore Ropp.

THEODORE ROPP (Duke University): Ladies and gentlemen, we are running under very severe time restraints, so I will try to make this introduction as brief as I can. My comments afterward will be equally brief. They will be typical of the comments on the paper that have preceded this, which I can best describe as "Hallelujah-but-."

Our first speaker is the one person here who has had his biography

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written while he is still alive. Those of you who are followers of *The New Yorker* will remember seeing in the issue of November 12, 1973, probably the most fascinating profile of a scholar, a bookman, and a personality that I have read in that magazine in many years. It is to be published as a hardback very soon. Mr. Scheer said that *The New Yorker* spent \$40,000 checking the facts and they now know the personality of George Scheer. He is a free-lance writer, a bookman, and a book salesman who has an abiding love for American history, and particularly the military history of the Revolutionary War. Most of you probably are very familiar with his book called *Rebels and Redcoats*, which he wrote with Hugh Rankin. I think you will find that the paper which he is about to deliver is a masterpiece of condensation about Washington and his generals. Mr. Scheer.

GEORGE SCHEER (Chapel Hill, North Carolina): I should like to say a few words about the paper that I am about to read. I had chosen to limit the title that you find in your program with the subtitle, "Some Problems in Command." When I found myself faced with the assigned topic, "Washington and his Lieutenants," and I thought of all that might be said of the many general officers who served Washington and the American cause well, indifferently, or poorly, I realized that in my hands it might make a full book, but only a terribly truncated 30-minute paper. Therefore, I sought to find some single aspect of their service which might prove provocative and perhaps reveal something of what was demanded of Washington in working with them. I mentioned this idea to my old friend Don Higginbotham one morning over coffee, and he suggested the treatment that I have adopted to meet the problem. And now, for whatever it means, I notice that Don, after our delightful lunch, has fled the scene and left me with the problem.

WASHINGTON AND HIS LIEUTENANTS: SOME PROBLEMS IN COMMAND

George F. Scheer
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Certain principles are set forth for the winning of wars: unity of command, economy of force, maneuver, surprise and others. How George Washington applied these principles in the war of the American Revolution and how and when he violated them, sometimes through ignorance and sometimes with deliberation, have made fruitful study. But one of Washington's major problems was simply to hold his army together. The record shows that to do so he often had to ameliorate, arbitrate or solve countless conflicts involving his lieutenants—their conflicts with each other, with the Continental Congress, with state governments, and with the Commander in Chief himself.

According to William B. Willcox and others, friction and distrust in the British high command became so endemic in the war of the Revolution that ultimately they paralyzed British strategy and contributed substantially to Britain's defeat. They were manifest in the relationship between Burgoyne and Gage, Burgoyne and Carleton, Burgoyne and Howe, Clinton and Howe, and Clinton and Cornwallis. While these contests for power in the British command are highly visible, we tend to view Washington and his lieutenants as a pantheon of noble, unruffled self-sacrificing heroes—with the two bad guys, Benedict Arnold and Charles Lee, in the shadows. Like all heroic portraiture, the realities were somewhat less heroic. It may be that if it were not for the tenacity, patience and tact of Washington as Commander in Chief—a man not without passions of his own—the American command might also have been torn asunder by discontent and jealousy, discords and wrangling, resignations and threats of resignations.

What Washington was to learn in eight-and-a-half years of command was that in his officers he had to consider character just as seriously as technical proficiency. His generous assessments of character and his insightful handling of men of most divergent dispositions contributed hugely to keeping the army of the Revolution alive.

"Perhaps the strongest feature" of Washington's character, Thomas Jefferson observed in a shrewd portrait of the General, "was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration, was maturely weighed. . . . His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I

have ever known. . . . He was indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good and a great man."¹ This prudence, integrity and strong sense of justice marked Washington's every relationship with his officers. Without doubt his understanding, flexibility and pragmatism in dealing with his lieutenants made the General's leadership remarkable.

It has been averred that leadership is compounded of many things, but no matter how many of the common elements of leadership reside in a commander, the capstone is presence. Washington's success with his lieutenants, and often with the men in the ranks, seems to have stemmed from a rare combination of impeccable strength and decency of character and a commanding presence.

He was physically impressive; he stood six feet two or three inches, and was broad of shoulder, long of limb, erect and muscular at two hundred pounds. His strength was extraordinary and his walk majestic. Although he was beset with the ordinary self-doubts of a keenly intelligent man, to the world he displayed splendid self-confidence. Silas Deane was impressed by his "soldierlike air and gesture."² There was an elegance about him. One foreign officer noted that Washington, whose "appearance alone gave confidence to the timid and imposed respect on the bold . . . possessed also those external advantages which a man born to command should have; tall stature, a noble face, gentleness in his glance, amenity in his language, simplicity in his gestures and expressions." A calm, firm bearing harmonized perfectly with these attributes.³

Washington, who over the years had mastered his own unruly psyche, regarded discipline as the first requisite of leadership. In a letter to a new young officer he wrote, "The best advice I can give . . . is to be strict in your discipline; that is, to require nothing unreasonable of your officers and men, but see that whatever is required be punctually complied with." ⁴ Following his own advice he was able to inspire and persuade, as well as simply to order, men to do his will.

His army was small. It appears to have fluctuated in numbers from 6 to 10 thousand men, occasionally swelling to 12 or 13 thousand, exclusive of state troops and militia which sometimes served with the main army,

¹ Jefferson to Dr. Walter Jones, January 2, 1814. Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. by P. L. Ford (New York, 1892-99), IX, 448.

² Deane to Mrs. Deane [September 10, 1774]. Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (Washington, 1921-36), I, 28.

³ Charles A. More, *The Chevalier de Pontigibaud, a French Volunteer* (2nd ed., Paris, 1898), 42.

⁴ Washington to Colonel William Woodford, November 10, 1775. George Washington, *Writings*, ed. by J. C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, 1931-44), IV, 80.

but often served in distant actions in remote theatres. His main army seldom was larger than the throng that we turn out at Carmichael Auditorium in Chapel Hill for a University of North Carolina-Duke basketball game. Therefore, most of Washington's officers had a chance to know him personally, if not intimately, and most of his men at least saw him. He was a visible general. He was not, perhaps, as beloved by the ranks as a latter-day Marse Robert, but if he did not inspire an outpouring of love from the ranks and from his officer corps, he did inspire awe, respect, admiration and confidence. For all that recruitment never reached a satisfactory level, that there were desertions and mutinies, the war finally was won because enough men followed him. A fact often neglected by those seeking "causes" for American victory (or conversely "causes" for Britain's defeat) is that America won because Washington could hold his army together. Washington and his army were visible signs of nationalism in the absence of other physical symbols and ideas.

For the war years we have 24 large, printed volumes of correspondence from the pen of Washington.⁵ These letters reveal, as does no other source, how many continuing and prolonged problems Washington faced with and among his lieutenants. They reveal Washington in perhaps his most accomplished role, that of gifted diplomatist, and they reveal indirectly the complexities of character of the men who made up the Revolutionary command.

If the British high command infighting can be said to have come to these shores with the arrival as early as May, 1775, of the celebrated three—Burgoyne, Clinton and Howe—Washington's problems of command can be said to have commenced on the day after his election as Commander in Chief by the Continental Congress. On that day, 16 June 1775, without regard for any seniority claimed by militia officers already in the rebel army that was blockading Boston or in the forces poised to join the newly-created Continental Army, Congress began naming its major-generals and brigadier-generals.

To ameliorate provincial differences, to appeal to sectional pride, and to generate and insure support and inter-colonial unity, Congress from the beginning tried to give preferential consideration in the selection of generals to those states called upon to furnish troops. Washington's own appointment was influenced strongly by this political consideration. New England had opened the war, but she needed the support of all the colonies to the South, especially that of the powerful, influential colony of Virginia. Although Massachusetts delegate John Adams' proposal of Washington for Commander in Chief was based upon Washington's

⁵ Washington, *op. cit.*, vols. IV-XXVII.

qualifications for the post, Adams and his supporters certainly were aware that Washington sprang from precisely the right geographical ground. The practice of deferring to regional considerations in officer selection, informally arrived at and informally augmented, was formalized in February, 1777, in the so-called Baltimore Resolution which provided that in voting for general officers, the Congress would consider line of succession, merit, and the number of troops raised or to be raised by each state. This last consideration became the predominant one and haunted Washington throughout the war. It denied him a voice in the selection of his lieutenants, led to great inequities in promotion, and acerbated the pride of many good officers.

Since the nucleus of the proposed Continental Army was to be the militia of the four New England colonies already turned out and besieging the royal troops in Boston, the major-generals and brigadiers were chosen from New England and New York. Three major-generals came from New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut—one each. Three brigadiers came from Massachusetts, two from Connecticut, one from New Hampshire and one from Rhode Island. Thus the appointments reflected the current composition of the army. Two major-generals and five brigadiers might have met the requirements of the army as it stood that June, 1775, but they would have been insufficient to meet political demands, so the number was increased.

Three appointments were exceptions to political or sectional considerations. In a country devoid of a military academy and a trained cadre of professional soldiers Congress, desperately seeking expertise, logically turned to three men who had held important rank in the British Army. For the second major-general after Artemas Ward of Massachusetts Congress chose Lieutenant Colonel Charles Lee, and for Adjutant General with rank of brigadier it chose Major Horatio Gates. Both Lee and Gates were living in America on British Army half-pay, which they resigned. As another brigadier with experience the Congress appointed Captain Richard Montgomery, an Irishman who had retired from the British Army to New York.

What Washington did not know, when the names of his lieutenants were announced, was the order of seniority of the general officers of the colonies; therefore, he could not know that the order of the selection in Philadelphia did not conform to the rank of the generals on the rolls of their different colonies. The commanding general of the forces outside Boston was Artemas Ward, Captain-general of the Massachusetts state service. Ward's commission was sent directly to him from Philadelphia, but the commissions for the generals not present at Philadelphia were to

be delivered by Washington when he arrived at Boston to assume army chief command. When Washington and his aide, Joseph Reed, rode north on 23 June 1775, the General carried in his military chest not only several Continental commissions but also the seeds of the first of many discords among his generals.

No sooner had Washington begun to hand out the commissions than a furor broke out. David Wooster, a Connecticut state service major-general demoted to brigadier, returned his Continental commission to Congress preferring to continue a militia general. Joseph Spencer, Israel Putnam's superior in the Connecticut service, resented subordination to Putnam and stormed out of camp. Dr. John Thomas, who held a Massachusetts lieutenant-general's commission, found himself jumped by inferiors, Seth Pomeroy and William Heath, and talked of retiring. Pomeroy, however, already had retired from the army. Washington thought that an appeal to the Congress for a reordering of the commissions might ease the dissatisfaction among his generals. He announced to the army the appointments only of the major-generals, saying that the other appointments had not been completed, and he set out to get the matter adjusted. He was only partially successful, but with his usual judiciousness he divided his army into three grand divisions so that none of the aggrieved officers was in contact with those whose promotions had injured them.

Joseph Spencer appealed to the Connecticut Assembly, and the Connecticut governor suggested to Washington that a special case be made for Spencer's retention of his command of the Connecticut troops. Washington, who scrupulously supported the supremacy of the Continental Congress and expected the same of his army and of local authorities, rejected the governor's intervention. Throughout the war, Washington would refrain from public criticism of Congress and he would keep it, or at least discreet members of it, fully informed of his plans and operations. He would never corrupt nor preempt its authority. Therefore, he wrote the governor that the right of Congress to supersede a provincial appointment must be unquestionable. "In such a cause, I should hope every post would be deemed honorable, which gave a man opportunity to serve his country."⁶ Spencer returned to camp and consented to serve under Putnam.

Thus it was that Washington's first official letter to the Continental Congress concerned a matter which continued for eight-and-a-half years

⁶ Washington to Governor Jonathan Trumbull, July 18, 1775. *American Archives*, ed. by Peter Force (4th series, Washington, 1837-53), II, 1686.

to be one of the most troublesome he was to face: appointment and promotion. As the war progressed, these squabbles intensified.

Before long even more complex personnel problems confronted the Commander in Chief. As Washington struggled with problems of command, he leaned heavily on the valuable counsel of General Charles Lee. He ignored, if indeed he realized, that from the outset Lee, his own choice as second ranking major-general, felt himself equally capable of the chief command. In Lee, Washington would have to deal with subtle and finally overt insubordination.

Although Lee's uncouth manners and coarse, acidulous, unbridled tongue brought upon him contempt and dislike from many quarters, his broad military experience and his organizational and technical skills impressed everyone. By the spring of 1776 Congress cried for his services in every potential trouble spot on the continent. But by March, 1776, when Congress appointed Lee to command the newly-created Southern Department, Washington had begun to entertain some reservations about him. Although Washington continued to view him as "the first officer in military knowledge and experience" in the whole army, he saw Lee also as "rather fickle and violent I fear in his temper."¹

When in November, 1776, Washington ordered Lee, now returned from the South, to bring troops from his post at White Plains to the main army threatened by Howe behind the Delaware, Lee chose to interpret the orders as discretionary ones. It has been argued convincingly, in my opinion, that Lee's strategic reasons for reluctance to join Washington have some validity. But the fact remains that, though Lee eventually put his troops in motion, Washington considered Lee's recalcitrance as disobedience.

Washington's concern increased when he inadvertently discovered Lee criticizing him in private correspondence with Joseph Reed, now Washington's Adjutant General, as a commander of "fatal indecision of mind," but he was spared a confrontation when Lee was captured by the enemy 13 days later. Considering it his duty to keep a good officer in the army, he overlooked Reed's part in the correspondence.

After Lee's exchange Washington closed with Clinton at Monmouth. Here the contest of wills between Washington and Lee climaxed. Lee led the Continental attacking force into a confused and tortuous action in

¹ Washington to John Augustine Washington, March 31, 1776. Washington, *op. cit.*, IV, 541.

which he was forced to retreat. In one of the rare times in his career Washington berated a lieutenant mercilessly, implying that Lee again had disobeyed orders. Lee demanded an explanation and Washington promised him a hearing. Lee was not satisfied and goaded Washington into ordering a court-martial, whereupon Washington charged him with disobedience of orders, unnecessary and shameful retreat and disrespect to the Commander in Chief. Then he removed himself from the matter and allowed Lee to condemn himself. The court, as Washington expected, found Lee guilty, but softened the accusations and suspended him for a year. Subsequently, Lee was dismissed from the army after having written a disrespectful letter to Congress. Washington lost his senior division commander. Given Lee's egotism, there probably was no way in which Washington could have saved him for the army.

If Washington's problems with Lee derived from raging egomania, those with John Sullivan, one of the original brigadiers, came from a thirst for recognition, a ubiquitous over-optimism and a thin-skinned sensitivity. Sullivan was trouble from the beginning. A handsome, heavy-drinking, small town lawyer and successful politician, he was as contentious as he was ebullient. Trouble began to surface in the summer of 1776 when Sullivan was in command of the Canadian campaign. When, after a retreat, he learned that Congress was sending Gates to supersede him, he rushed to Philadelphia to tender his resignation from the service. Washington, convinced that "his resignation will take from the service a useful and good officer," helped to dissuade him.⁸ Some 8 months later Sullivan learned that Arthur St. Clair, recently promoted to major-general, had been named to command at Fort Ticonderoga. Off went another complaining letter to Washington demanding the command of Ticonderoga as "my right."⁹

The time had come for a stinging rebuke and Washington gave it: "Do not, my dear General Sullivan, torment yourself any longer with imaginary slights and involve others in the perplexities you feel on that score. No other officer of rank . . . has so often conceived himself neglected, slighted and ill treated as you have done, and none . . . has had less cause." He closed his letter sharply by saying he had "not time to dwell upon subjects of this kind."¹⁰ Washington's patience was great but not unlimited. For the moment he had settled the issue: a second resignation by Sullivan had been aborted.

Washington to The President of Congress, July 17, 1776. Washington, *op. cit.*, V, 296, 296n.

⁸ Sullivan to George Washington, March 9, 1777. Jared Sparks, ed., *Correspondence of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1853), I, 353.

¹⁰ Washington to John Sullivan, March 15, 1777. Washington, *op. cit.*, VII, 290-1.

Three months later Sullivan bellowed again when Phillipe du Coudray, a French volunteer, was granted a major-general's commission by Congress, responsible only to Washington and Congress. This time he was supported by Nathanael Greene and Henry Knox who threatened to resign in protest with him. The matter evaporated when du Coudray drowned in the Schuylkill, but the episode left a bad taste in the congressional mouth and had later repercussions.

In Sullivan's next controversy, however, he had Washington's support. After Congress in 1777 voted an inquiry into his conduct at Staten Island and Brandywine, Washington persuaded that body to defer his recall until the crisis in Pennsylvania was past, although he declined to defend him, reminding Sullivan that "none have accused you of want of bravery and exertion."¹¹ Congress had shown a disposition to go after the scalps of generals who it thought had failed in the field, but while Washington might have feared that other valuable generals would feel dangerously insecure if Sullivan were allowed to go down under the attack of Congress, he adhered to his rigid policy of noninterference with the prerogatives of Congress.

When Sullivan finally achieved another independent command, it was for a joint assault with the French on the British post at Newport, Rhode Island. When the French disappointed him in their cooperation, again his temper raged. He publicly lashed out viciously at the new French allies, creating for Washington a most delicate and difficult diplomatic problem. But Washington never gave up on Sullivan's good qualities. The next spring he gave Sullivan command of an expedition against the Indians. Again Sullivan carried it off well, but his intemperate, barbed criticism of the Board of War led Congress to accept, to his surprise, an offer of resignation that he made on the grounds of ill health, and the career of another of Washington's generals came to an end.

There were instances of bitter controversy between Washington's generals from which Washington wisely held himself largely aloof. One was the complex affair known as the Gates-Schuyler controversy. Schuyler was a wealthy, upstate New York aristocrat, gracious, patient and able, both lofty and touchy, in almost perfect tune with Washington, but heartily disliked by the New Englanders. Upon his appointment as one of the first major-generals in 1775, he was given command of the Northern Department that embraced upper New York state. To this confused and unhappy theatre Horatio Gates also was assigned in the summer of 1776

¹¹ Washington to John Sullivan, September 23, 1777. Washington, *op. cit.*, IX, 242.

under such ambiguous orders that they touched off bitter dispute between the two men until Congress interpreted the orders to make Gates second in command. When Washington reproved Schuyler for abandoning Crown Point that summer and Schuyler's demand for an inquiry was denied, Schuyler resigned, but Congress refused to accept his resignation.

By the time Gates had led troops south for the winter Jersey campaign, both generals had their champions among the troops and in and out of the halls of Congress. Gates that winter lobbied in Congress for Schuyler's command, and through the instigation of the New England delegates managed to wrest it from him. Two months later Congress reversed itself. Gates raced south to Philadelphia and on the floor of Congress made a spectacle of himself by defending his conduct and attacking his critics hysterically. Congress passed the problem to Washington. Before Washington could reassign Gates, Burgoyne's drive from Canada had forced the Americans out of Ticonderoga and Schuyler was relieved of his command by Congress. The Gates partisans obtained the appointment for Gates. Schuyler left the army, was exonerated by a court-martial the next year, and continued to render valuable service to his country outside the army. Building on some of Schuyler's actions when he had been in command, Gates successfully defeated Burgoyne at Saratoga in the fall of 1777.

The whole affair reflected no credit upon either general and demonstrated how petty and vindictive Gates could be in matters of rank and authority. Washington had begged to be excused from naming Schuyler's successor. He believed that Schuyler had done the best that could be done, but he also was motivated by political factors. Here were two highly sensitive generals, each with considerable merit. To espouse the cause of either would alienate the other's friends in the army and in Congress. Conceivably he could lose some of his own status with either New England or New York. Evidently he concluded that since Congress often took strategic initiative and moved generals from department to department as it saw fit and retained the prerogative of making appointments, he could afford to stand aside and allow Congress and the officers to settle the question between themselves. As a rationale he took the position that as commander in the Middle Department he was not on the scene to see details in a distant department. He used this reason three years later when Congress queried him about the suitability of Gates for the Southern command.

Admittedly the cases mentioned concern extreme problems of character and of personnel. But there were innumerable other cases, sometimes extending over long periods of time, sometimes outbursts of short duration triggered by slights real and fancied, and many of them most

severe. Some of Washington's most valued officers, even those closest to him, showed human frailties and added to his burdens. While he was struggling to heal the Franco-American breach made by Sullivan, he had to dissuade the hot-headed young Lafayette from challenging to a duel the Earl of Carlisle, chief of the British Peace Commissioners, for supposedly insulting the French. Congress never forgave Nathanael Greene for his threat to resign over the French officer appointments and for an intemperateness with Congress which matched that of Benedict Arnold with the Philadelphia Council. Washington interceded on Arnold's behalf when Arnold was passed over for promotion. The Commander in Chief faced a crisis of sorts when outspoken, highstrung Anthony Wayne, one of the most professional of his lieutenants, was replaced by St. Clair as commander of the Pennsylvania Line and Wayne implied that he might retire if forced into a secondary role. But when Wayne was given command of the new Light Infantry, Daniel Morgan was so unhappy that he in turn threatened to give up the service, although he finally accepted an "honorable furlough" until another opening for him should occur.

Much more sinister than the myriad dissatisfactions were the anti-Washington cabals both in Congress and in his own army. Men like Thomas Conway and Johann deKalb hinted or proposed that he be replaced, and the intrigues against him by Gates and his supporters, for all the study made of them, remain enigmas. Whether there were any substantial plots, Washington knew he had enemies, some of whom he chose to confront and some to ignore. From time to time the weary General must have found himself privately agreeing with John Adams who declared in 1777 that he was "wearied to death with the wrangles between military officers, high and low. They quarrell like cats and dogs. They worry one another like mastiffs scrambling for rank and pay like apes for nuts."¹²

But surely no commander could have been more acutely attuned than Washington to the soldier's sensitivity to recognition, glory and honor. Had he not himself, many years before, as a young officer of 23 with all these same ambitions and dreams, disputed seniority of rank with Captain John Dagworthy? Had he not ridden in dead of winter from Virginia to Boston to make his case before the Commander in Chief of His Majesty's forces in the colonies? But it was neither recognition, nor glory nor honor that precipitated Washington's last confrontation with his generals, it was the mundane matter of pay. The incident, as mystifying in its way as the Conway Cabal of 1777, occurred in the spring of 1783 at Newburgh, New

¹² Adams to Abigail Adams, May 22, [1777], Lyman H. Butterfield, ed., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), II, 245.

York, when the war was over and the army awaited the completion of formal peace negotiations. Historians have given it the convenient label of The Newburgh Conspiracy while debating vehemently among themselves, as recently as this year, whether the affair was a conspiracy at all.

Its roots were legitimate grievances about shameful arrears in pay, unsettled food and clothing accounts, and the failure of Congress to implement its commitment of October, 1780, to Continental officers of "half pay during life." Both officers and men were alarmed lest, when peace was concluded, they would be dismissed summarily with neither funds nor prospects. With Washington's permission a delegation of officers carried a strongly worded appeal to Congress, but secured no satisfaction. The brooding resentment of the officers flared upon the appearance in the encampment of two "Addresses" that urged the officers to hold an extra-legal meeting next day for the purpose of taking justice into their own hands. Washington quickly denounced these "disorderly proceedings" and called a meeting of his own for a few days hence. There, speaking with accustomed forcefulness, he urged his lieutenants to refrain from actions that would "lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained," and promised his utmost endeavors for redress of their grievances.¹³ As he spoke, with perhaps studied showmanship, the tall, solemn General reached into his waistcoat pocket for his new eyeglasses, and said, "Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind."¹⁴ His words and presence sufficed and the officers voted to leave their problem in the hands which they had learned to trust. Thanks in good part to Washington's intercession, the army shortly was paid and peaceably disbanded.

The extent to which problems of human relationships among his lieutenants consumed the General's thoughts, energies and time during those eight-and-a-half years is incalculable. Assessing Washington's efforts as Commander in Chief, his biographer, Douglas Southall Freeman, concluded that, "Only recruitment and subsistence had been more difficult tasks for Washington than the maintenance of a decently qualified, contented and cooperative command."¹⁵ How well Washington succeeded in this particular task must be considered if we are to take the full measure of Washington's leadership; the record testifies that he did exceedingly well. On the whole it may be said that the officers of the Continental Army—men like Greene, Knox, Steuben, Lincoln and many

¹³ Washington to The Officers of the Army, March 15, 1783. Washington, *op. cit.*, XXVI, 226.

¹⁴ Samuel Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw* (Boston, 1847), 103-5, cited in Douglas S. Freeman, *George Washington* (New York, 1948-54), V, 435, 435n.

¹⁵ Freeman, *op. cit.*, V, 279.

others—remained steadfastly loyal to their Commander in Chief and to their common cause. When finally they parted from him for the last time in December, 1783, at Fraunces Tavern in New York, Washington could say to them, "With a heavy heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you. I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy as your former ones have been glorious and honorable."¹⁶

ROPP: Our second speaker comes from the Library of Congress. Dr. Sellers is Historical Specialist in the American Revolution, for the Bicentennial program of the Library of Congress. His field of interest, of course, is the Revolution. His most recent book is now in press and will be on the Virginia Continental Line. Much of his paper is taken from research he has done for this book, and he will speak on the common soldier in the Revolution.

JOHN SELLERS (Library of Congress): Not too long ago my colleagues and I at the Library completed a search of the manuscript division for a publication that would expose the manuscripts from the Revolutionary era. Two days ago, when I was preparing to leave for this meeting, one colleague reminded me about air power in the American Revolution. He claimed to have seen some documents about balloons to be used, I think, on Manhattan Island. I cannot verify his discovery, but I trust him. Evidently some people in the late eighteenth century did have their heads in the air. Of course others may have said that they had air in their heads.

I am speaking on the common soldier of the American Revolution, and doing so in a rather technical way, so I will try to go slow enough so you will not get lost in figures.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, V, 467.

THE COMMON SOLDIER IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

John R. Sellers
Library of Congress

Much has been written on the American Revolution over the past 200 years. By the latest count there are between 12,000 and 14,000 printed sources on the subject and over 10,000 related items. There are books or articles, for example, on everything from the origins of the eighteenth-century Revolution to the continuing Revolution today. You can read about the politics of the Revolution, the diplomacy of the Revolution, the clergy of the Revolution, the women of the Revolution, the heroes of the Revolution, and on and on it goes seemingly into every conceivable, and sometimes inconceivable, aspect of the movement. In fact one occasionally wonders what there is to be said about the Revolution that has not been said already many times over.¹

But every scholar knows that no subject ever is exhausted. Only in recent years have historians given serious attention to what is perhaps the most important element in the Revolutionary War: the common foot soldier. Heretofore, whatever interest there was in common soldiers was satisfied by publishing the names of this faceless multitude in lengthy compendiums, state by state. Few people even thought to ask what kind of people they were, why they fought, or how the war affected their lives; those that did felt the subject impossible to explore. Consequently, when soldiers are discussed, it is usually with regard to their performance on the field of battle, as seen through the eyes of officers, or else they are lost amidst elaborate descriptions of their dress, weapons, and accouterments.²

However, recent interest in the common soldier has precipitated

¹ The figures given here are based on the results of an extensive survey of the literature in the field of the American Revolution recently conducted in the General Reference and Bibliography Division of the Library of Congress. A major bibliography on the subject is to be published by the Library of Congress in 1975.

² Examples of the type of works mentioned are Louis A. Burgess, ed., *Virginia Soldiers of 1776*, 3 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1973); Ross B. Johnston, ed., *West Virginians in the American Revolution* (Parkersburg, W. Va.: The West Augusta Historical and Genealogical Society, 1968); and H. J. Eckenrode, *List of the Revolutionary Soldiers of Virginia*, supplement (Richmond, Va.: State Printing Office, 1913). For a traditional treatment of the common soldier in the Revolution see Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier under Washington* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902).

deeper and more meaningful study. A good example of the kind of work now being done on the private soldier of the Revolution is the article written by Edward Papenfuse and Gregory Stiverson on "General Smallwood's Recruits" published in the January, 1973, issue of *William and Mary Quarterly*. While completing their graduate study at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Papenfuse and Stiverson traced the origins and careers of 308 privates in the Maryland Continental Line with the aid of census returns and tax and pension records. These recruits were late-comers in the war, 1782 to be exact, and are not as representative of the vast majority of Maryland soldiers as might be desired, but the picture they present is most enlightening. Together, Smallwood's recruits appear in direct contrast to the popular image of the common soldier as a yeoman farmer or artisan fighting in defense of liberty and property. Rather, they were the dregs of Maryland's white male society: indentured servants, transported convicts, and sons of poor farmers. All lacked capital and all, so it appears, saw the Continental Army as their best opportunity for employment.³

Theodore Crackel at the West Point Military Academy in another recent study used a sophisticated analytical technique that included partial correlation, multiple regression, and factor analysis to study the careers of 158 privates in the New Jersey Continental Line. Mr. Crackel was interested largely in the postwar mobility of veterans of the American Army, which he found to be extremely high, yet he was able to demonstrate statistically that there is a low correlation between all independent variables and dependent variables measuring mobility. In Mr. Crackel's words, this suggests "the possibility that those who moved—north, south or west—were not so different from those who remained at home as we have, up to now, been readily willing to believe." A third study, the results of which I reported at the meeting of the American Historical Association in New Orleans in 1972, concerned the careers of 546 soldiers of the Massachusetts Continental Line. For the most part these representatives of New England soldiery were poor farmers and artisans, young and almost totally indifferent to the cause of independence, who were enticed into service by the promise of land, steady wages, and easy discipline.⁴

The paper presented here, narrowly focused on 658 non-

³ Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, "General Smallwood's Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXX (January, 1973), 117-32.

⁴ Theodore J. Crackel, "In Arms and in Motion: An Approach to the Study of Mobility in the Revolutionary War Generation," unpublished; John R. Sellers, "The Origins and Careers of the New England Soldier: Noncommissioned Officers and Privates in the Massachusetts Continental Line," unpublished.

commissioned officers and privates in the Virginia Militia and the Virginia Continental Line, continues the work on the common soldier in the Revolution. The 658 individuals were selected at random from the Revolutionary War Pension Application Files in the National Archives in Washington, DC.

* * * * *

As initially constituted, the Virginia Line almost perfectly reflected the society it represented. On December 31, 1775, Leven Powell, writing from Williamsburg, Virginia, where the Virginia Convention was meeting to select officers for the newly established Virginia Continental Line, complained to his wife Sarah that the delegates seemed "very desirous of serving either themselves their Sons, Cousens or Friends, . . ." Powell, one of many aspirants for high rank, had traveled all the way from his home in the northern part of the state to offer his services to the Convention, and he was greatly offended when he was overlooked. What Powell observed, and unknowingly documented, was the lateral movement of hundreds and eventually thousands of Virginians from civilian to military life. He noted that the military ranking and ordering of individuals was such that the best offices went to the "best" people.⁵

Unfortunately, this practice of awarding rank in society with rank in the army was not peculiar with Virginia, except perhaps in degree. It became less pronounced as the war progressed because of the seniority system and because men with unusual leadership ability tended to move up in rank (which, incidentally, was one of the democratizing effects of the Revolution), but as first organized the Continental Army was a class

The list of Continental generals commissioned in the first two years of the Revolution, including names like George Washington, Philip Schuyler, Thomas Mifflin, Christopher Gadsden, William Smallwood, Arthur St. Clair, William Alexander, and John Sullivan, reads like a virtual "Who's Who" among the Revolutionary generation. Virginia began its Continental Line with three regiments, and all three men appointed to head the units (Patrick Henry, Thomas Nelson, and William Smallwood) were members of the ruling class. They were also members of the Convention that made the appointments, which may have influenced the selections. None of the remaining field officers in these early regiments (William Christian, Francis Eppes, Alexander Spotswood, and Charles Scott) by any stretch of the imagination can be classed with the common

⁵ Leven Powell to Sarah Powell, December 31, 1776 [1775], Leven Powell Papers, Swem Memorial Library, College of William and Mary.

sort. Andrew Leitch, who began his military career as a captain in the 3rd Virginia Regiment and was killed at the Battle of Harlem Heights, even took his Negro servant to war with him.⁶

The question before us now, however, is who composed the rank and file in the Virginia Revolutionary army? From the data available it is difficult to refute the claim that in Revolutionary Virginia the common soldier could be classed as "rank and file" whether in or out of uniform. Basically they were young white males between the ages of 16 and 25, the sons of poor farmers and farm laborers. By using the pension applications of the soldiers in this survey who were alive after 1817, we can determine the age at enlistment of 419 of the 658 noncommissioned officers and privates simply by subtracting the number of years between the time that they entered the army and the time that they applied for the pensions from the age given on the pension application form. Obviously, not all of the ages supplied on these forms are correct, for memory fades with age and many veterans were in their eighties when they made their applications. A few could only guess at how old they were and in all probability some missed the mark by 10 or more years.⁷

Allowing for error, by simple arithmetic we can establish that 90 percent of the soldiers were under 25 years of age when they entered the war. The median age of new recruits was only 20, and 21 recruits were mere boys 14 or 15 years old. Sixteen was the minimum legal age for service in the Continental Army or in the Virginia Militia, but recruiting officers, under pressure to enlist men for 15 regiments without the aid of a draft bill, which the Virginia Assembly refused to pass until the war was almost half over, often winked at such restrictions. In 1775 and 1776 these officers were also in competition with recruiters from South Carolina and Georgia. Negroes, who made up almost half the population in those two states, were not eligible for military duty, and the Virginia Assembly unwisely had allowed the recruiting officers to complete their Congressional quotas in the Old Dominion. Not surprisingly, as one observer noted, in Virginia there were recruiting parties over every hill.⁸

Frequently new recruits in the 14-19 year category entered the

⁶ *Proceedings of the Convention of Delegates for the Counties and Corporations in the Colony of Virginia, held at Richmond Town, in the County of Henrico, on Monday the 17th of July, 1775* (Richmond, Va.: Ritchie, Trueheart, and Duvall, 1816), 11-19; John R. Sellers, "The Virginia Continental Line, 1775-1780," (unpublished dissertation, Tulane University, 1968), 50-54.

⁷ Revolutionary War Pension Application Files, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁸ *Journal of the House of Delegates, October 7, 1776-December 21, 1776* (Richmond, Va.: Samuel Shepherd and Company, 1828), 95, 97, 108; John R. Sellers, "The Virginia Continental Line," 69.

military as substitutes, both paid and voluntary. Older men were more likely to have enough money to hire substitutes. Samuel Baker of Fauquier County, 35 years old when the war began, hired two young men to fight in his place when he was called out—the legal requirement for men seeking to avoid duty in the Continental Army. Thirty-one-year-old Philip Bailey of Amherst County escaped militia duty the first time he was needed by hiring a substitute. Bailey's excuse was that he had to work a crop of tobacco that he had growing upon rented land. If a substitute fought voluntarily, it was most often for the benefit of a father who was needed at home or for an older married brother.⁹

Interestingly, if you group the soldiers surveyed by year of enlistment, the average age does not vary year by year more than by two percentage points. The preponderance of men in the army in 1781 continue to show up in the 14–19 age bracket, as did those at the beginning of the war. This suggests that there was a high turnover rate among the Virginia troops, both in the militia and the regular line, and that white males in their early and late teens were the best source of recruits throughout the Revolution. It also calls into question statements about the professional quality of the Revolutionary Army after the Valley Forge experience. The general assumption has been that during the winter of 1777–1778 Washington's army was forged into a fighting unit equal perhaps to the best the British had to offer. Now it appears that the men in service during the last 5 years of the war never had seen Valley Forge, and that the training they received was scarcely any better than that of their predecessors.¹⁰

There is no denying the fact that young men make good soldiers, although hardly at age 14 or 15. They generally are more daring than older men, are strong and supple, and are socially more expendable since they have fewer filial obligations and do not yet hold important positions in society. One cannot help but wonder, however, how the young men of Virginia perceived the struggle into which they were thrust. What could have motivated them to take up arms? From the style of writing on their pension applications and the number of signatures that appear in the form of an "X," it is a safe bet that most noncommissioned officers and privates had little or no education. Also, relatively few soldiers seem to have traveled widely enough before the war to acquire much perspective on the problems confronting the American people. Almost 82 percent of the men surveyed were born in the Old Dominion, and half of those still lived in the county of their birth when they entered the war. They were very stationary people. Of the relatively few men born outside Virginia, most were from nearby Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and

⁹ Revolutionary War Pension Files, S1054; S5266.

¹⁰ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*.

most of those had entered the state in early childhood. Only five of the total 658 were foreign born.¹¹

In this light it is doubtful that Virginia soldiers perceived the kind of oppression that is supposed to have driven them to the point of war. Many never had paid any taxes and they probably knew next to nothing about the British tax policy. Certainly the philosophical arguments over the natural rights of man escaped most of them. If these soldiers were not motivated by a true spirit of patriotism, what was it that prompted them to enlist in the Continental Army for terms of anywhere from one year to "for the war," meaning as long as the war lasted? Was it land warrants, bounty money, or both?

Apparently cash bounties were a particularly effective inducement to service in the Continental Army, at least during the first few years of the war. However, after inflation became rampant and returning veterans spread their tales of the horrors of battle and the almost equal horrors of camp life, soldiers could not be purchased in Virginia at any price, and the Assembly had no choice but to adopt a draft bill. Militia service always had been obligatory, but conscription for the Continental Army was a different matter entirely. In Virginia the suggestion had been beaten down in the Assembly every time it was made, no doubt in part because the practice would tend to lump the sons of the well-born with commoners. One need only look at the repeated chastisements of officers in the general orders of the Commander in Chief concerning their association with privates to understand the depth of feeling on this issue. Reasons of discipline aside, properly schooled men of rank simply did not consort with the rank and file.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² In a letter to General Washington dated June 30, 1778, Thomas Nelson, Jr., who was attempting to raise a cavalry unit in Virginia, made the following observations:

So great is the aversion of the Virginians to engaging in the army that they are not to be induc'd by any method. I cannot say they are in an apathy, for view them in the Mercantile way, and they are as alert as could be wish'd, or rather more so, almost every Man being engag'd in accumulating Money. Public Virtue & Patriotism is sold down to South Quay and there ship'd off in Tobacco Hogsheads, never more, in my opinion to return. The number of resignations in the Virginia line is induced by officers, when they have returned, finding that every Man who remains at home is making a fortune, whilst they are spending what they have, in the defence of their Country. If a stop be not put to the destructive trade, that is at present carried on here, there will not be a spark of Patriotic fire left in Virginia in a few Months.

Nelson's letter is in the Washington Papers, Library of Congress. Also see Washington to Patrick Henry, November 23, 1778, and Washington to the Committee of Conference, January 20, 1779, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office), XIII, 310; XIV, 73. For the relationship between officers and privates see Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, VI, 110, 167, 187; VII, 54; VIII, 400.

Since land was the popular concept of wealth, land bounties may have enticed many men to fight for independence. The precise way common soldiers viewed this benefit, however, is something of a mystery, for most land warrants eventually wound up in the possession of merchants and speculators. The veterans who received the warrants may not have understood their real worth or if they did, immediate necessities outweighed their long-range benefits and they were sold or exchanged. Many lost their warrants through natural disaster, such as during the crossing of a river or in the burning of one's house, a not infrequent occurrence. In any event, the national government was tardy in fulfilling its responsibility concerning military lands and must share the blame for the land warrants not falling into the right hands.¹³

It is not as difficult to understand the motives of the men who answered the call to arms during the campaign against Governor Dunmore, especially if they lived in the tidewater region of Virginia, but few of the recruits surveyed lived east of the fall line. In fact, just the opposite was true. They were distributed over the entire state with the heaviest concentration in the piedmont area and in the Shenandoah Valley. Frederick and Culpeper Counties ranked first on the list with 23 men each, followed by Fauquier County with 22 and Bedford with 21. Ten other counties contributed 10 or more men each, but again all of these counties were in the piedmont or western parts of Virginia. This imbalance in the geographical distribution of the soldiers may be the result of my too heavy reliance upon the records of men from the early part of the alphabet, but it is more likely illustrative of the areas in which the vast majority of the common people lived. At this late date most of the rich flat land in the tidewater area already had been absorbed into the large estates of the Virginia gentry.¹⁴

Cash and land bounties aside, however, the common people of Virginia were not so enthusiastic about independence or about their participation in the War for Independence as we have been led to believe. When compared to the larger body of troops, soldiers who reenlisted for a second or third term were relatively few. Most privates left the army at the expiration of their initial terms of enlistment, if not before by illicit means, and turned deaf ears to the patriotic entreaties of officers from the Commander in Chief down. Various tactics were used to influence veteran soldiers to reenlist—increased bounties, early discharges, special leaves—to no avail. For example, when Washington led his army to Valley Forge, the terms of service of most of the men in the older Virginia regiments were about to expire. To encourage them to reenlist he began

¹³ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

granting early discharges, the idea being that if they went home happy, they would be more likely to show up again in the spring. But by January 4, 1778, only 40 men in the entire Virginia Line had signed up for another term. Over the next 2 months at least 950 noncommissioned officers and privates returned to their homes despite the assurance from Governor Patrick Henry that the state would pay \$20 over and above the regular Continental bounty to every soldier who reenlisted in the Line. In the end, out of 11 regiments there were only 124 reenlistments.¹⁵

For the social historian the most significant development in the lives of these soldiers occurred during the postwar period. As mentioned earlier, most of the men were farmers, an occupation that they could practice almost anywhere they went. Since they owned no land in Virginia, they scattered like quail. It may be that the experiences of the war had lessened their fears of the unknown, or perhaps they had been made footloose by their travels. Whatever the reason, Virginia's Revolutionary War heroes left the state in a steady stream after about 1785. One former soldier migrating from his home in Buckingham County, Virginia, to Tennessee reported traveling with a party of 700.¹⁶

The final destination of the soldiers who left the Old Dominion was almost invariably west, or slightly west by northwest, or west by southwest of their former residences regardless of the route they happened to take. Rarely did they change parallels, which conforms to general migration patterns. Those from northern Virginia drifted into south central and southwestern Ohio, particularly in the area of the Virginia Military Reserve. A few went even farther west into southern Indiana and Illinois. Veterans from counties along the North Carolina border and from the extreme southwestern part of Virginia moved into eastern and north central Tennessee. The rest went to Kentucky, most frequently into the Blue Grass district. Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Missouri also received a few stragglers, but not in sufficient numbers to merit closer scrutiny.¹⁷

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Writings of Washington*, X, 54-56, 332; David Griffith to Mrs. Hannah Griffith, November 13, 1777, David Griffith Papers, Virginia Historical Society; George Weedon to Patrick Henry, January 4, 1776, George Weedon Papers, Annmary Brown Memorial Library, Brown University; Patrick Henry to Washington, January 28, 1778, Washington Papers, Library of Congress; "Return of those noncommissioned Officers and privates in the Virginia Line, whose Terms of Service have Expird," February 28, 1777, Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁶ Revolutionary War Pension Files, W8307.

¹⁷ Revolutionary War Pension Files *passim*; Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), 180f.; Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 240.

Overall, 325 of the 658 soldiers surveyed left the Old Dominion sometime after the conclusion of the war, and another 160 moved to a different county within the state. Only 75 either made no move at all or confined their moves to the county from which they had been recruited. The final residences of the remaining 98 soldiers could not be definitely established, in part because their records are incomplete and in part because the pension claims filed in their names were submitted by descendants or by widows who had remarried and moved away. This translates into an emigration rate of 59 percent, which is extremely high any way you look at it. In fact, between 1790 and 1800 the overall migration from Virginia was so rapid that 26 counties lost population.¹⁸

There was a general pattern for the soldiers in this movement westward. Usually they returned to their homes after receiving their discharges and tried for a time to seek out a living through farming, laboring, or plying a trade that they may have picked up during the war. Most of the men married within 4 to 6 years after they reentered civilian life, often to women 8 or 10 years younger. Then, beginning about 1785 and continuing well past the turn of the century, they moved west traveling either down the Great Valley Road and Richmond Road to Cumberland Gap and over the Wilderness Road to the area around the Kentucky River or into Ohio by Braddock's Road and Zane's Trace. Those going into Tennessee used the Knoxville and Nashville roads.¹⁹

Often the veterans made a series of moves before they finally settled. The initial move was usually the longest; the others consisted mostly of short hikes into a neighboring county. Now and then you find someone like Daniel Barrow of Brunswick County, Virginia, who seemed to have great difficulty in locating a suitable home. Barrow was born in Brunswick County in 1757 and was still living there when he entered the war. When he left the state of Virginia after the war, he went first to Surry County, North Carolina, then to Knox County, Tennessee, then to Wayne County, Kentucky, and finally to Jackson County, Illinois. Another case is that of Martin Amos, who began his military career as a rifleman at age 16. Amos was recruited from his home in Albermarle County, Virginia, on the southwestern border. In 1789 he moved northward into Kanawha County in the present state of West Virginia, from there to Highland County, Ohio, for 1 year, back to Mason County, Virginia (now West Virginia), for 3 years, and was last heard of in Gallia County, Ohio.²⁰

From the little information available on the year or years during

¹⁸ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*; Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 240.

¹⁹ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*; Billington, *Westward Expansion*, 241-42.

²⁰ Revolutionary War Pension Files, S32104; S8024

which these migrants left the state of Virginia it is difficult to establish a direct connection between their departures and the opening of new lands in the west. You would assume with good reason that their initial moves were related to state or federal land claims, because some soldiers received warrants from both governments. This does not appear to have been the case at all. In most instances when these veterans come back into the view of the historian through their pension records, after having been lost to sight since their wartime experience, they are propertyless. It is obvious that many veterans were given land, but it was usually poor land, and officers and speculators more than likely had beaten them to the frontier by a decade or more.²¹ As a matter of fact, when a new land office was opened in Virginia in 1778 to handle claims in Kentucky, so many Virginia officers resigned their commissions in order to make their claims that some officials feared that there would be a shortage of officers in the Line at the start of the next campaign. When the common soldier got to Kentucky, he found himself in almost exactly the same socio-economic position as before. Through a system of military warrants, grants, pre-emptions, and purchases, Virginia's junior aristocrats already had gathered most of the best land in the region and were busy establishing a replica of tidewater society.²²

It may be a grave error to speak too strongly of economic motivation in the westward movement. As has been suggested by numerous other scholars, religious influences, a desire to rejoin former friends, and restlessness all played a part in such decisions. Thomas P. Abernethy, the famous historian of the early western frontier, asserted that frontiersmen considered it discreditable for one man to amass more than he could cultivate, but I doubt that. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the soldiers who stayed in the Old Dominion were better off economically than were their distant compatriots. Many seem to have been in line for a small inheritance, generally a farm. Their certified statements of worth show them, on the average, to possess far more in the way of land, livestock, and farming implements than did veterans in Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio.²³ It would appear that those who remained had some hope of a better future, and that those who left for the West did not.

As for the average "estates" of Revolutionary War veterans, they often scarcely are worth recording. Occasionally you find a man of moderate means who tried to qualify for a pension by being deliberately vague about his net worth or, when rejected by the Pension Office, who

²¹ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*.

²² Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind: A Cultural Analysis of the Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 149-50.

²³ Revolutionary War Pension Files, *passim*.

placed his property in the hands of his children and submitted a revised claim. Hence you get men with 100 or more acres, one or two slaves, and a variety of livestock, tools, and household goods. More often, however, the list is quite short: three hogs, one old mare, a milk cow, one swarm of bees, one table, three chairs, and a few kitchen utensils. I have seen the record of one who had only the clothes on his back and a pair of spectacles.²⁴

In conclusion, when we speak of the common soldier of the American Revolution, for Virginians we are talking about small-propertyed or propertyless farmers who were destined to make several moves westward before they grew too feeble to attempt still another start in life. They manifested few of the benefits of culture or education and frequently had never learned to sign their names. Theirs was mostly the hand-to-mouth existence of a tenant farmer or farm laborer and if they wanted something better, the frontier was their best hope of obtaining it. For many the Revolutionary War had offered their first opportunity of employment and immediate cash rewards, but they quickly became disillusioned with the life of a soldier. After 2 years of war they were most reluctant rebels.

Drawn by the promise of land and a fresh start, they joined the flow of humanity westward to a meager and disappointing inheritance. Though now idolized in an anomalous way for the part that they played in the War of Independence, for many soldiers this experience was a stab at the future, a grab at a better life. It was a life that few achieved, although the act was repeated time and time again. But if mobility and migration are the elements which have made America different, if they are the great equalizers and the source of our optimism, perhaps the common soldier of the Revolution made his greatest contribution, not on the field of battle, but in his peacetime battle on the frontier against a land policy that operated in the interest of a privileged few.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

COMMENTARY

THEODORE ROPP

Duke University

I do not have much to say about these two excellent papers and I want to leave time for questions from the audience. The papers deal in a most fascinating way with the same army, which is not always true of papers which I have heard on this particular subject. They reflect one of Colonel Dave Palmer's major points: at least in Virginia there was an army which was a reflection of the entire society, and it was led by second-rank aristocrats and land speculators. What is missing in these papers—not that either speaker was required to deal with it—is a question that I would like to address: what about the middle ranks, the noncommissioned officers and artisans who helped to hold the army together? My guess about these people is that when the aristocrats went West, they took along a patronage system of the Virginia kind and people between what Europeans would call the aristocracy and a working peasantry. We often forget that there are mid-rank craftsmen, small businessmen, blacksmiths, and other such people who move with their patrons in this sort of society. They would get the secondary jobs and would come to dominate the politics of places like Tennessee and Kentucky. We have no way of getting at them by the kind of papers presented here this afternoon.

When we consider the age of the people who enlisted, it is true that those aged 14 or 15 were mere boys. But perhaps our statistics might be slightly skewed by the fact that we are dealing with people from an agrarian society. In New England these people would have gone on voyages with privateers at the age of 14. They would come home and if they had enjoyed it, would have signed on again, and again and again. Each time many of them would have reenlisted at an increase in rank.

I think much of the reenlistment data may be skewed by the fact that a Virginian who enlisted did so for service a long way from home. In New Jersey he would enlist, let us say, as a wagoner or a wagon master and would not be given an actual combat job. Logistics was the service where youngsters were trained. If they liked army life, then they went into the ranks.

One point that disturbs me is that if the Continental soldier was so badly fed and so badly clothed, why was he so healthy and able to move fast and hit hard when he had to take the field? I have the feeling that the army, in winter at least, partly supported itself off the land by simply

allowing many of its younger people to go home for a while. In the spring they appeared again a little better fed and a little better clothed. That type of thing was happening to the farm boy in Pennsylvania or New Jersey regiments, but was not happening to the farm boy who enlisted from Virginia. But you have the same phenomenon in the privateer in New England. This is not a real criticism of either paper, but somewhere one has to grapple with the old Revolutionary sergeant, or the old Revolutionary corporal, the people who did reenlist.

I have one final point about the entire symposium. Somehow, we have gotten away from one of John Shy's remarks, in his opening speech about ideology. I address this to the members of the "Princeton Mafia." It is amazing that these two Princetonians have not mentioned one of the most stimulating of all American works on the period of the Revolutionary War. This is by a Princeton professor named Robert Palmer, and it is called *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*. Although it is obvious that boys 14 and 15 years old cannot be expected to know much about the British tax system, I am not at all certain that the Revolution did not generate its own ideology in the middle ranks, an ideology which we should not forget. I thought about that last night when the Air Force Academy Cadet Chorale was singing so magnificently. The Chorale did not sing the greatest of all Revolutionary songs, a French song that came out of this period. Nor did it sing the greatest of all Civil War marching songs which I once heard a French navy band play on the streets of Amiens and which in a way reflects more of the passions than does the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." "Marching Through Georgia" is pertinent here. What I am asking in this discussion is why, after they were dismissed, did the American patriots immediately form the Society of the Cincinnati? Did they not have a vision of the kind of thing for which they were fighting? I think that in this ideological context of the Revolution, which we are now playing down while Continental and French scholars may be over-playing it, we have one of the remaining problems of the history of the Revolutionary War.

DISCUSSION

SELLERS: In partial response to Professor Ropp's comments let me read you a brief quote from Thomas Nelson, Jr. as he was attempting to raise a cavalry unit in Virginia. This was written in June of 1778, which accounts somewhat for the class about which he is speaking. "So great is the aversion of the Virginians to engage in the army that they are not to be induced by any method. I cannot say they are in an apathy, for viewed in the Mercantile way they are as alert as could be wished, or rather more so, almost every man being engaged in the accumulating of money. Public virtue and patriotism is sold down to South Quay and there shipped off in tobacco heads, nevermore, in my opinion, to return. The number of resignations in the Virginia lines is induced by officers who, when they have returned, find that every man who remained at home is making a fortune while they are spending what they have in the defense of their country. If a stop be not put to the destructive traffic or trade that is at present being carried on here, there will not be a spark of patriotic fire left in Virginia in a few months."

Second, with regard to the New England soldier I did a similar study on the Massachusetts soldier—an entire regiment, plus selected companies from three other regiments. I found that, no matter with what year of the war you deal, company by company the age factor did not change. The soldiers still were the young, the inexperienced, the unemployed, the socially expendable.

ROPP: Now do we have any questions?

PHILIP A CROWL (Naval war College): Dr. Sellers, is there a kind of built-in distortion in such heavy reliance upon pension claims to draw inferences about the social character and status of any group of Revolutionary soldiers? I would guess that the people who filed pension claims at the age of 75 were people who were broke and were not necessarily representative of the total mass.

SELLERS: That is a very good question. I was hoping that you would ask. There are two aspects that I think should be considered there. First is the number of soldiers, or theoretical number of soldiers, compared to the total population. Take the three million population and subtract the women, which some have calculated to be 45% of the population; subtract male and female blacks; subtract the Loyalists, which nobody has ever been able to calculate accurately; and subtract the children. Then subtract those who were too old to fight and you have about everybody in the coun-

try that was of military age and able to fight. The total is less than Upton's inflated figure of 400,000 soldiers. So, a large percentage of the country's population served in some capacity.

Second, in the study I did on Massachusetts I found as high as 40% representation from individual companies in the pension application files. Now if you calculate the death rate, you have almost every man still living who had served in those particular companies. To me this says quite a bit. These people would win few most-likely-to-succeed votes. They were the perennial poor. I think that they ended life after 40-50-60 years virtually without anything. That is most unusual. Almost everyone accumulates something over a lifetime, but they had absolutely nothing.

GEORGE CHALOU (National Archives): John, when you did your sample, did you take into effect noncommissioned officers that were in the pension files?

SELLERS: This is on both noncommissioned officers and privates. I took that into consideration.

CHALOU: So that would be in your study?

SELLERS: Yes, but not in the Massachusetts case. However, there was no appreciable change in results.

W. BRUCE WHITE (University of Toronto): I am a little troubled about the inference of motivation, particularly economic motivation. In stating that most Virginia enlistees had little or no education, and that they had not traveled, you seem to imply that they had no comprehension of what the war was all about. Could it not be that there was considerable information that filtered down into local areas and that a spirit of patriotism after all may not rest on intellect, but on a kind of emotional contagion?

SELLERS: Well, I would refer you to the desertion rate and the apathy of many of these soldiers at critical points of the war. I am not impressed by the patriotic fervor of the privates. I think that they acted overwhelmingly out of self-interest. I do not believe that they really fought with a true understanding of independence. The harangues they got from their chaplains, and the constant lectures, especially on the eve of the winter encampment, about reenlisting tell me that officers had a lot of trouble. I think Washington's chief problem, and chief accomplishment, was to keep an army in the field.

DAVID SKAGGS (Bowling Green State University): I wonder if you looked at the company grade officers to see if they were able to get into the

field grade ranks from their relatively lower socio-economic class? Were they able to profit from their officership experience through social and economic mobility after the war?

SELLERS: I have the list of cards on all Virginia officers. It is a future project, so I have a difficult time answering you now. There were exceptions. Some people starting at the rank of captain, like Daniel Morgan, made it eventually to general. But no Virginia field grade officer started as a private. They may have started as a cadet or as an aide de camp, but I know of no officer in Virginia of high rank who started at the bottom.

SKAGGS: But were they able to capitalize on what modest rank they may have been able to get because they were elected by the local citizenry for economic benefits afterwards? It seems to me that you are indicating that the captains were running off to Richmond to get their land grants. Now, if these captains came from modest social economic backgrounds, they were utilizing the war as a means of advancing themselves economically.

There was no further response, and the session ended.

The Wrap-up Session

**THE SIXTH MILITARY HISTORY SYMPOSIUM
IN PERSPECTIVE**

OPENING REMARKS

Colonel ALFRED F. HURLEY (USAF Academy): Ladies and gentlemen, at this time we are going to introduce an innovation. Instead of following our previous practice of calling on the Harmon lecturer and the session chairmen to review the symposium, we have invited a panel of fresh faces to come on at this time to critique all that has transpired over these two days. John Shy has kindly agreed to pinch hit for Professor Alden as the chairman of this panel. Since all of us now know a great deal about Professor Shy, I shall try to save some time and turn over this session to him.

JOHN SHY (University of Michigan): Last sessions like these are always psychological problems. People are thinking about the next few hours, the next few days, their travel plans. Signs of restlessness are in evidence, packed bags in the corridors, airline tickets in coat pockets, and so on. But such a session, however brief, is vital to bring the analytical variety of three working sessions such as we have just had into some kind of synthetic focus. A symposium as full of good historical research and thinking, and as well organized and run as this one has been, deserves our best efforts for a final reflective, synthesizing hour. On behalf of all the participants and the guests, let me say to General Allen and his staff, to Colonel Hurley, and to the officers and cadets of the History Department how much we have enjoyed these 3 days, and how much they have done to restore our flagging hopes for the Bicentennial.

I also would like to say again how much we regret the absence of Professor John Alden of Duke University, whose research and writing has blazed a wide trail through the Revolutionary War and on whose work all students of the Revolutionary War must rely. I hope that the disproportionate number of North Carolinians in our midst will carry our greetings and best wishes back to Professor Alden.

The three panelists assembled this afternoon bring different interests, different viewpoints, and different expertise to a reconsideration of what we have heard yesterday and today. I will introduce them all now, give you some idea of what they want to talk about, and then have them make their comments. After that, I think we ought to throw the remaining time wide open to questions of all sorts, whether they are directed to panelists, to the givers of papers, to the critics of those papers, or to chairmen of those sessions. Critics even can criticize the other critics if they so choose, but let us make it wide open once we have heard from the panelists.

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The first panelist, Linda Grant DePauw, an associate professor of American History at George Washington University, is a graduate of Swarthmore and got her PhD at Johns Hopkins University. Her first book, *The Eleventh Pillar*, was on New York state and the federal constitution. She is engaged in a large scale, very important project as editor-in-chief of a documentary history of the first federal congress. Projected to be a total of 18 volumes, the first two volumes of the series already have appeared. She also has written a book on the women of New York during the American Revolution. Her concern, I think will be mainly with the social side of the war, especially with that neglected one-half of the population about which almost nothing has been said—women.

John Brett, who is sitting next to Linda DePauw, is a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force and is an exchange officer at the United States Air Force Academy. Squadron Leader Brett read history at Queen's College, Cambridge, has served on the faculty at the Royal Military Academy at Kuala Lumpur, and has been a staff officer at the Ministry of Defense in London. You might say that he has had considerable experience in what once were the British colonies, having served in Malaysia, in Cyprus, and in this colony of North America. Squadron Leader Brett will give us a view of the Revolutionary War from the outside—the view from Britain. It might be worth pointing out that this view is not necessarily unsympathetic. There was a very vocal minority in British politics which was pro-American throughout most of the war and which undertook to represent the American viewpoint, although not very effectively, I am afraid, at least until after Yorktown when the Earl of Shelburne, one of those vocal critics, finally reached the top of political power just long enough to give half of North America to the new United States in the peace negotiations. This was a territorial gift that we, in spite of what Dave Palmer says, did not actually win on the battlefield.

The third member of the panel I probably do not have to introduce to you, but I will anyway. Professor Louis Morton. Daniel Webster Professor, chairman of the history department at Dartmouth College, sometime Provost at Dartmouth College, was called earlier the symbolic godfather of the Duke Mafia. I do not know about that, but he certainly is one of the deans of our profession. I do not want to embarrass him, but I think anyone who knows his work would agree that he has done brilliant work in various kinds of military history: operational history where his book, *The Fall of the Philippines*, is one of the classics, maybe the classic in its way, of the big green series, *History of the United States Army in World War II*; strategic history with the first of the two volumes that he is writing on strategy and command in the Pacific War for that same series; the history of military institutions; and the history of civil-military

relations. Perhaps his greatest achievement will be as editor and academic entrepreneur for the Macmillan series on war as a military institution in the United States. Those of you who are familiar with the volumes of that series which already have appeared know how very good they are and how influential they already have been. I should add, finally, that this paragon was trained as an early American historian. His first book was in the field of colonial American history. He is formidably well qualified to discuss any aspect of this subject that he might choose. Mercifully, he has chosen only one aspect: strategy in the American Revolutionary War.

First, Professor DePauw.

COMMENTARY

Linda Grant DePauw
George Washington University

When the announcements of the Sixth Military History Symposium began to come to the attention of my friends and colleagues in the historical profession, the discovery of my name on the program drew a standard comment: "What in the world are *you* doing at *that* meeting!" That was certainly a legitimate question because I am not known as a military historian by any stretch of the imagination. I have supervised some doctoral work on the military history of the Revolution as part of my general supervision of graduate students in Early American History, but I have published nothing in the field myself.

I learned last night at the banquet what might be considered a relevant fact. When this meeting was being planned last October, an overzealous feminist, who is attached to the Air Force in Washington, apparently planted the idea with Major Anderson here at the Academy that I am a Captain in the Marine Corps Reserve. This is not so. The truth is that the closest I ever came to formal military training was 3 years in the Girl Scouts of America.

I am known among specialists in Early American History primarily as a political historian, but in the last few years I also have developed an interest in the legal and social history of what I call the "unfree" classes of Revolutionary America: the poor—those so propertyless that they could not vote, slaves, white servants and apprentices, legal infants under the age of 21, and, finally, women. That explains my attractiveness to the organizers of this symposium.

In recent years a new and, to me, extremely exciting approach has developed in the military historiography of the Revolution. It is most visible in the work of John Shy, but it is apparent also in the writings of Don Higginbotham and it was illustrated nicely here at the symposium in several papers, particularly those by Professor Calhoun and Dr. Sellers. It might be described as the social history of Revolutionary Warfare.

When this Sixth Military History Symposium was in its early planning stages, a fifth session, to be entitled "The Social History of the American Revolution," was considered. It would have dealt with the contribution of the Black population to the war, perhaps with that of women, perhaps with that of young people, together with a discussion of the impact of the

war experience on American society as a whole. When it was not possible to fit this session into the program, the planners, perhaps intimidated by my mythical position in the Marines, were kind enough to put me in the greatest power position of all—namely, commenting with nobody to comment back at me. I am expected to make some remarks on the new field emerging in the study of the War for Independence: the history of the unfree classes.

One does not need elaborate computer techniques to see that most of the people involved in the Revolution were neither military officers nor naval officers. Most of them were not common soldiers either. Perhaps five percent of the total population would have fallen into the category that Dr. Sellers describes: the poor people who have practically nothing and yet are free, white and male. Most of the population was composed of servants in legal bondage, slaves, boys and girls under the age of 16, and women. None of these persons legally could join the army, although some in each of these classes did. These people made up roughly eighty percent of the American population in 1776, yet they have been all but totally ignored by historians for almost 200 years without anybody being much upset or even noticing their absence. Now and then, stories about the Revolution include a tale or two about some young boy or a few titillating remarks about camp followers, but this is only to add a little color or humor. The unfree may have been invisible to historians, but they were quite visible to the generation that fought the war. Sometimes they were an aid, nice to have around, sometimes they were a hindrance and got in the way, but never were they invisible. You cannot hide eighty percent of the population. Let me cite one example. An order of General George Washington dated August 4, 1777, notes that, among his other anxieties of the day, "the multitude of women, especially those who are pregnant or have children, are a clog upon our every movement."

Why is it that after nearly two centuries of being ignored, the great mass of the population suddenly is attracting the attention of scholars? Why do we now begin to worry about common soldiers, propertyless artisans, Blacks, women, young people, and even the native Americans—the Indians? Former generations of historians never bothered with them, never thought about them; why are we asking these questions now? I believe that Professor Shy gave us the right answer in his splendid lecture yesterday morning. It is that ugly word "relevance." It hits the nailhead whether we like it or not—our present world and our past world connect. The ivory tower is a glorious myth. No one actually can live in one. If he does, certainly no one else ever will read his work. To use Shy's words, there is simply no escaping the subjective quality of historical study.

In recent years all sorts of so-called minorities have become noisy and

influential. Many years ago Carl Bridenbaugh noted in his presidential address to the American Historical Association that that body was no longer a society of gentlemen. He was right. Since World War II a great many people who are not "gentlemen" have appeared on the scene. In other words, they are not middle class, they have not gone to the right schools; they have gone to places like Smith or Morgan State. They are not Anglo-Saxon, they are not white, some—God help us—are not even male. These people have penetrated the American political structure and the legal structure. They are threatening to amend the Constitution and alter the economic structure, they are getting into all sorts of jobs, even penetrating the military and the academic structure. Often noisy, uppity and unpleasant, they do not always behave like gentlemen, because they are not gentlemen. But they are impossible to ignore. In the past when a gentleman came face to face with someone who obviously did not belong, he turned his back and the intruder became invisible. Today the intruder just shouts louder.

Because we now "see" people who are not gentlemen in the present, we also "see" them in the past. When we have our national birthday party 2 years from now, there will be an emphasis on so-called minority groups that would not have been conceivable as little as 5 years ago. The National Park Service, for instance, in setting up its traveling exhibitions on education is determined to include something on women, something on Blacks, something on Indians, something that will make their whole observance relevant. What we are witnessing, since scholars as well as the consumers of the National Park Service product want this kind of stuff, is a flowering of what might be called "minority studies." To me this term is as obnoxious as the word "relevance," but sometimes truth has to be expressed in obnoxious terms.

Because secondary literature has ignored these minorities for so long, it is not immediately obvious that integration with traditional history is feasible. I am sure that everyone who goes ploughing in the underbrush of minority history will have conversations with historians who are writing textbooks or working on special programs to integrate high school courses, sympathetic liberal scholars who will wonder timidly: "Is there really enough data about women, or Blacks, so that we can maybe write three pages on them?" Is it possible to integrate history? The answer is surprising; certainly it surprised me when I started digging into this undergrowth of social history. The answer is a resounding "yes." There is a treasure of unexploited material that will allow us to place the majority of the American population into our study of the Revolutionary War. These people left as much debris, as much historical evidence, as did anyone else. It may not be in the traditional form. You never are going to find the private diary of a Black slave woman, but in the probate record, when her

ownership was transferred from one generation to another, you may find out more about her than you can discover about any of her contemporaries except the top aristocrats. There will be detailed descriptions of her physical characteristics, whether she is good at spinning, if she is a lousy cook, what she is worth as far as producing more children is concerned, and so on down the line—a great deal of detail. This is but one example. Dr. Sellers' paper shows us what some scratching in such unexpected sources will produce.

Let us take a closer look at women, the unfree group I know best. There are many aspects of the study of women in the eighteenth century which should be integrated into the narrative of the Revolutionary era, but I am going to confine my remarks to a narrowly defined area of military history. Don Higginbotham this morning distinguished between yesterday's session as one that dealt with the formal side of Revolutionary military history, and today's session, which he says deals with the underside. This is a sensible distinction, and may be applied when we are considering the integration of minority history. The minorities cannot be integrated on the formal side. If you insist on asking narrow traditional questions, such as how did the generals decide where to march their men, you are not going to be able to integrate minorities. Our session on strategy could not possibly have been integrated. Women, 14-year-old boys, Blacks, and runaway servants do not make strategy. They may be called upon to implement it, they may be its victims, they may louse it up, but they do not make it. You may be wondering why I am saying this with so much emphasis. I have met some militant feminists and Black activists who were anxious to recover minority history for political purposes. They do not care too much about the truth of the past so long as it is politically useful, and they would like to believe that there has been a conspiracy to conceal the contributions of minorities in these formal areas. I do not believe it. We never will find that Nathanael Greene was really a Black man; and we are not going to find that Henry Knox was a woman.

A good number of Black men, perhaps 5,000 according to the standard authority, Professor Benjamin Quarles, served with the American troops. Also a large number of male children, some of them as young as 11 or 12, served with the American troops. But very few women did. There are a few famous women soldiers like Deborah Simpson and Sally St. Clair, who dressed as men, collected bounties, drew full rations, and served with the infantry, but they are very rare, mere curiosities. It is foolish to pretend that they have any military significance. I have been able to discover no woman soldier who rose above the rank of sergeant. There is an individual referred to in the records as "Sergeant Samuel Gay" who was dismissed from service with a Massachusetts regiment shortly

before the Battle of Saratoga when it was found that he was a woman dressed in man's clothing. But one sergeant is not a military movement.

In the little time that I have I want to suggest to this group that there are three areas in the military history of the Revolution, narrowly considered, where the role of women was central and where further study should be particularly rewarding—not on the formal side, but on the underside.

First there is supply. The Revolution is distinct from every other war that America has fought in that in every other war there has been a reserve of unemployed or underemployed women who could move into war industries or take over men's jobs when men became soldiers. This is not the case in preindustrial, eighteenth-century America. Labor was in very short supply. Women already were fully employed, not merely in traditional women's work which at that time was much more strenuous than it is now, but in the family business. In every occupation open to men there also were women working—from apothecary and blacksmith to tanner and shipwright. There was no occupation in which men engaged that did not include women acting either as practitioners or owners of the business. Consequently, when the war began, the particularly feminine work of providing clothing, shirts, uniforms, stockings, and shoes had to be done as overtime work in an economy where there was already full employment and a shortage of labor. When there was a lack of clothing for American troops, it was due more to a shortage of women to produce it than to a lack of money. Even if money had been available, what could the Patriots do with it? Could they import the cloth from Great Britain to make shirts for American soldiers? If the women could not produce the cloth, it could not be bought. If they did not sew the shirts, there were not going to be any shirts. The production and supply of clothing for the troops is one element in supply in which women's role was central.

Women also were frequently the producers of saltpeter for gunpowder. They got the recipes, met together and made the stuff up. They were also producers of shot. This operation involved scrap drives and hard physical work as well. For women who were used to lugging kettles that weighed 50 pounds empty on and off hot fireplaces, making shot was not a great departure from every-day work. When the statue of George the Third was pulled down from Bowling Green in New York City, the head was kept for political purposes. The body of the statue and the horse upon which it sat were moved to Connecticut where five women turned it into shot. Since shot, gunpowder, and uniforms are important to any army, it is clear that supply was an area where the military historian must consider women.

Second, there was camp maintenance. Let us deal at once with the dirty word "camp followers." In the Revolutionary Army camp followers were not whores. If you read traditional history of the Revolution, historians seem to feel it very indelicate to mention these women at all. At best they mutter a little about "women with loose morals." These historians mistook the nineteenth century—which had very different attitudes toward sex, toward women, toward just about everything—for the eighteenth century. Camp followers in nineteenth-century America were not the same kind of women as those of the eighteenth century. Martha Washington was a camp follower, after all. Camp followers were respectable married women, the wives of officers as well as wives of enlisted men. There were plenty of chaplains with the American army, and if a young man from Massachusetts met a young girl during the retreat through New Jersey who decided that she would like to make her life with him, the chaplain married them.

The work of camp followers was cooking, repairing clothing, washing, foraging for the horses, keeping the kids under control, and occasionally doing clerical chores like making copies of outgoing mail. For this they were entitled to the equivalent of a dependent's allowance which did not go to any women who stayed at home. The allowance was half ration for each woman, plus a quarter ration for each child. The British troops always had more women than the Americans. They brought a lot of them with them, English women, Irish women, and German women. They recruited some women from among the Loyalist population in America. Because they had a lot of women, they kept their uniforms in repair. The ragged and unkempt appearance of the Patriot forces was attributed at the time to a shortage of women. Without enough females to wash and mend, one Tory reported that the American soldiers, "not being used to doing things of this sort, choose rather to let their linen, etc., rot upon their backs than to be at the trouble of cleaning 'em themselves."

Third, there was medicine and health care. Cleaning was camp followers' work, especially since the men had plenty else to do. It was almost impossible to maintain minimum standards of hygiene in American camps until women joined the troops. An observer at Cambridge in 1775 wrote: "Many of the Americans have sickened and died of the dysentary brought upon them in a great measure through an inattention to cleanliness. When at home, their female relations put them washing their hands and faces, and keeping themselves neat and clean, but being absent from such monitors, through an indolent needless turn of mind, they have neglected the means of health, have grown filthy, and poisoned their constitution by nastiness." Naturally, uncleanness breeds disease, so maintaining hygiene in a camp was an important job.

In eighteenth-century America, before the development of medical schools, the healing arts were considered to be women's work. It was true that there were a few male doctors who came from places like Edinburgh, but generally women were taught medical techniques, practices, and medical prescriptions and recipes by their mothers just as they learned to cook. Furthermore, male physicians were not the same kind of physicians we think about when we think of doctors today. They had formal medical training, it is true, but the things they were taught to do to people frequently killed them. They believed in drastic purges, bleeding, and other such methods, so they were considered much less desirable than female nurses. When Congress inspected the hospitals at Ticonderoga, one of the causes of suffering of the troops, they said, was lack of good female nursing. During battle the camp women were the medics. They were the ones who carried the water and tended the wounded. True, they did a pretty rotten job of it, but what medics there were, were these camp followers. Not infrequently one of these so-called "Molly Pitchers" would take up an artillery position abandoned by a wounded soldier. Eighteenth-century women were quite used to handling weapons, and they were not accustomed to waiting for a man to come along when they saw a job that needed doing.

I have described three specific areas of investigation to illustrate how our perspective of the military history of the Revolution might be expanded. If it does expand along such lines, and it seems to me that it is, Revolutionary history is going to become much more interesting to people, because, using Shy's word again, it will be more "relevant." Even more important to those of us who are scholars, it will be an improvement because it will be truer history. It will be truer to the past because it will embrace the lives of the whole Revolutionary generation, not just the lives of a small minority. If you think about it, the real minority history of the Revolutionary War is not that of women, or of poor folk; it is that which confines itself to the activities of free, adult, white males.

COMMENTARY

John D. Brett
Squadron Leader, RAF

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen. Colonel Hurley said yesterday that, in the absence of Professor Esmond Wright, I had consented to take his place, but I think I should point out that he was using consent in the usually accepted military definition. I am absolutely certain that he was not using the Oxford dictionary's definition.

I am very conscious of two things this afternoon. First, it is a very special privilege for me to be asked to join, not only this symposium, but also this particularly distinguished panel. It is a great pleasure to sit alongside Professor DePauw and Professor Morton. Second, as you are all well aware, the reason for Professor Wright's absence is that the British Prime Minister decided that October 10 was a suitable date on which to hold a General Election. I am very conscious that in doing so Mr. Wilson was following the practice of certain other British Prime Ministers in ignoring the events taking place in the American colonies.

While Professor Shy has indicated that I may have certain rather vague qualifications for being on this panel, I think it would be impertinent of me to attempt any form of detailed comment on the scholarship shown by other speakers at this symposium. My comments, therefore, will be simple, brief, and perhaps, to many of you, amateurish. But they reflect views which are my own, drawn together as I have sat and listened in the past 2 days to so many excellent contributors.

There are three particular areas which I would wish to draw to your attention, if I may. First, the general impression that I, as a visitor and a new reader of American Revolutionary warfare, have of the current trend in American scholarship is that attention now is being focused more on examining the reasons for British failure than on the reasons for colonial success. I have always assumed, I suppose somewhat naively, that in America I would get the view that the colonials won and the British lost. The view from London is somewhat different, as you are well aware. Yesterday, Professor Gruber said that the origins of British strategy should not be equated with the reasons why Britain lost. It seemed to me, however, that he may have been implying that, with the limitations placed upon British leaders, which he so adequately explained, there was no possibility that a coherent strategy could be made, let alone implemented, by the quality of leadership then available.

Yesterday, the broadsides from the Navy, in the form of the contributions by Admiral Hooper and Admiral Hayes, further emphasized that we should take into account that supplying and maintaining an army across 3000 miles of ocean was the key issue determining strategy. If I understand the two admirals correctly, they were saying that there was no way for the British adequately to supply their troops. In other words, the conclusion I am beginning to draw, somewhat tentatively, is that perhaps Britain had no chance of success in this war, even from the very outset. The view that Britain had no real chance for success is particularly interesting to me because of recent scholarship on the two major British battles of the Second World War; perhaps I ought to say British and Commonwealth battles, rather than just British, because I think there are still some Loyalist elements left somewhere at the back of the audience. The conclusions of some military historians about the Battle of Britain and the Battle of El Alamein have been that in both instances the German forces suffered from such a severe lack of strategic direction, tactical command, and supply, similar to the British during the War of American Independence, that there was no way in which they could have been successful. One can stretch this, I suppose, too far, but let me suggest that perhaps it is possible that Goering and Rommel did have something in common with Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne.

Second, there is the matter of the making and execution of strategy in general. I would suggest that of the European powers, only the French and the Germans can claim legitimately to have produced front-rank military strategists. The British have not. The best we have is a man who achieved only the rank of captain in the British army, Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart. What we *have* produced, however, are some outstanding battlefield commanders. In times of war in modern British history, whether in the eighteenth or twentieth centuries, we have managed to produce outstanding politicians capable of directing grand strategy and of controlling the field commanders, or outstanding battlefield commanders capable of a successful prosecution of the war. Sometimes both have occurred together. I think particularly of Chatham and Wolfe in the Seven Years War and of Churchill and two or three successful British generals in the Second World War. As I see it, the remarkable feature of the War of American Independence was that it is the only time in modern British history when neither an outstanding politician nor an outstanding field commander emerged. To find the reason why might well be a suitable area for research.

Chatham was the only great eighteenth-century war minister able to direct global grand strategy, as Professor Billias suggested yesterday. Chatham can, of course, stand alongside Churchill where perhaps no one

else can, although on reflection I think Lloyd George might possibly disagree with me. Yet, if we could not find a war minister of Chatham's ability formulating and directing British strategy in the War of American Independence, at least it would seem to me to be reasonable to expect to find an outstanding field commander. Such a field commander always had emerged before and such a commander always has emerged since that time to win the last battle. But in this war there was to be no one until Rodney, and his great victory came too late to influence the major issue.

My third area of comment is something to which both Professor Shy and Colonel Palmer have alluded. Perhaps the problems faced by the British in America in the eighteenth century—geography, climate, the need to concentrate on achieving an overwhelming superiority of numbers, concern for an over-extended supply line, and the need to make every possible use of local friendly forces—were very much like military problems faced by commanders today. If we could change the names of the participants in the War of American Independence and put it all into the twentieth century, I am sure that the phrases which would dominate our discussion would be guerrilla warfare, counter-insurgency, internal security operations, and unconventional war. The aims of the rival commanders in the War of American Independence did not differ substantially from the aims of commanders in twentieth-century unconventional war; on the one hand to bring a superiority of personnel and armament to bear upon the opposing forces, on the other to avoid the decisive battle until the war of erosion had been won and the will of the opponents to continue the war had been evaporated.

The British historian, Eric Robson, has likened the British experience in the War of American Independence to that of the war waged by the French in Indochina. If I may take that analogy one stage further, is it possible to suggest that Yorktown was the British Dien Bien Phu? I think that I can get away with that suggestion, but I doubt whether Colonel Palmer would like me to see General Giap as another George Washington. In the early days of American involvement in Vietnam, British political and military leaders were free in their advice to the United States on how to win that war, based upon our experience in defeating communist insurgency in Malaya. After all, the view went, Malaya and Vietnam were both in Southeast Asia and the enemy was much the same. Eventually, even we began to see that it was not the same kind of conflict, long after you had made that adjustment, I might say. But often I wonder whether rather better advice might have been forthcoming from the British if it had originated not from the example of our success in Malaya, but from our failure to win the American War of Independence.

Let me conclude by a reference to that distinguished journalist, Chester Wilmot, who argued that the cleavage in the English-speaking world which resulted from the American Revolution and the remarkable retention in the memory of both sides of the Atlantic of the mythology of the war—the misdeeds of George III, of British imperialism, and of ungrateful, rebellious colonials, and so many more—so bedeviled Anglo-American strategy in the Second World War that it handed over control of post-war central Europe to the Russians. Even if Wilmot was correct about the existence of those myths, I suggest to you that such myths have been well and truly buried by the work of this symposium.

COMMENTARY

Louis Morton
Dartmouth College

I had hoped that there would be a general exodus so that it would be unnecessary for me to make any comments, but I see I am stuck with it. I have a correction to make, a few observations, and then some comments, none of which will come up to the level of the two excellent presentations that you have heard on this session so far.

First, I would like to make a small correction to the program which lists me as being from Dartmouth University. You know, of course, that Dartmouth is not a university; it is a college, a small college, and there are those who love it. And the reason it is still a college goes back to a famous case called the Dartmouth College case.

Our naval contingent informs me that Saturday or Sunday of this week is the 199th anniversary of the birth of the United States Navy; this fact should be noted while we are observing the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The Navy believes that it may not have been represented adequately at this Symposium, and I believe it altogether appropriate that we note its 199th birthday. I am also informed by other sources that today is National Newspaper Carrier Boys' Day. I do not juxtapose these two events; I simply mention them for whatever interest they might have for you.

This has been a very interesting and profitable meeting for me, largely because it has raised in my mind a number of important questions, but few answers. There were a number of references during the strategy session to someone named Fabius. Nobody told me who Fabius was, but I gather from the numerous references to him that he was a key figure in the American Revolution. Also, I gathered from the discussions of strategy during the Revolution that the colonists did not exactly win, but rather that the British lost the war though they really should not have. What we seemed to be trying to do during the session was to figure out how we could have given them the victory, what they should have done to have won. But I had always believed, and I thought most strategists agreed, that the British could not have won no matter what they did. So I am utterly confused about the strategy of the Revolution.

In his opening lecture John Shy mentioned two essential facts (which I thought were the same) about the American Revolution: the British lost

and the colonists won. Then he asked why this was so. My question is different. Could the British have won the war? They could have won more battles by fighting differently, but I believe that Admiral Hayes and Admiral Hooper, both of whom have discussed the naval strategy of the Revolution at this symposium, are correct. The British never could have won that war. With the logistics problem of carrying supplies across 3000 miles of ocean and the difficulty of fighting in a wilderness, the British just could not have won the war so long as the colonists could continue to fight, or, better still, refused to give up. Just as there was, in my judgment, no way that we could have won in Vietnam where the problem was not altogether dissimilar, so the British could not put down the Colonists in 1776. In Vietnam, we could have won a lot of battles, but as long as the Vietnamese refused to give up, we could not have won. The Americans made many mistakes during the American Revolution, as did the British, but in the final analysis, the question has to be asked—could the British have won? I guess that I must agree with the two Admirals who said that Britain could not have won—and I do not say it regretfully.

One of the sessions at this symposium posed another important question: what kind of a war was the American Revolution? I have no definite answer. It was described in part as a partisan war, and I agree that it was. It also was a civil war, and, depending on your definition, an internal war. But what the speakers forgot to mention was that it was also a dynastic war, an imperialist war, and a global war. It was almost any kind of a war you want to mention. Having said all that, I do not think that we have said very much. We can use each of these terms as a device to deal with a different aspect of the American Revolution. It is a useful and convenient teaching device, but it does not explain much about the war, at least not for me.

I discovered during one of the sessions that the war was fought by an army which was not an army at all, it was the militia. Here I was completely mystified because I had always thought of the militia as an institution derived from the Mother Country and brought into existence in the Colonies by law in the beginning of the 17th century. I think the first militia legislation was enacted in Virginia about 1623, but John Shy will correct me on that. The militia was written into the laws of every colony and its purpose as an institution, as I recall it, was not really to provide an army. The militia was not an army designed to fight wars; it was essentially a system for providing men who were trained, who had weapons, who were officered, and who could be called upon to fight in defense of the community. The usual method was to get them through volunteering, although they could be drafted if necessary. During the Revolution new militia units were formed. These were quite separate from the original elite militia companies.

It seems to me that we were confusing two quite different things throughout much of the session about the militia. On the one hand, we were talking about the militia as an institution which survived in decrepit form. It was weak, it was abolished here and there, but it continued to exist as a method for raising troops to fight in wars. In point of fact it did not function very well as a military force in any of our wars. This militia, I gathered from the discussion, was virtually dead by the time of the Revolution. Yet we find the provision about the militia in the Constitution some years later, and there was the Militia Act of 1792, and the militia continued to exist, at least on paper, until 1903, when it was succeeded by the National Guard, which is still viewed as the heir of the militia.

Obviously there is some confusion here, and I think it arises from the fact that we were talking about two different things. One group, I think, talked about the militia as a military force fighting in a war, and I have no quarrel with those who said it was a failure. It was. The last war we attempted to fight with militia was the War of 1812. My recollection is that half a million militiamen were raised in that war, of whom more than half fought 3 months or less. That gives you some idea of how effective it was as a military force—half a million men, larger than any army Napoleon raised. But in 1812, we still had the institution.

I found the session immediately preceding the present wrap-up session to be most interesting. Two things struck me about both of those papers. The first was the relationship between Washington and his generals and the continual disagreements they had with each other. I am sure the same thing is true today in the Pentagon, as well as in the field. It certainly has happened in past wars. Generals, especially the able ones, are usually sensitive, egotistical, and jealous of their commands. Washington, I suppose, had no more trouble with generals than Eisenhower may have had with some of his. I cannot, for example, imagine that Sullivan was more difficult than Patton. There is a kind of timelessness about the kinds of things generals worry about. They always seek better posts for themselves, they worry about whether they have been given enough attention or enough ribbons, whether they will be promoted, and what kinds of command they will get.

The problems of enlisted men in all ages and armies are much the same also. The fact that many were drawn from the rural regions and went back to their farms, and the fact that some were under the age of 17 or 18, sounds very much like Marine volunteers during the Second World War and subsequent conflicts. There is a kind of timelessness about all these things that would be interesting to study someday on a comparative basis. I think that it would give us a better perspective on the kinds of problems

posed by war and would make possible a better description of the behavior of officers and of enlisted men. Where did they come from, what did they do, how did they live, what did they do when they went back?

We also should consider the whole area of comparative history. I strongly second Professor DePauw's comments about social history. Military history is an extremely broad area of study. In my experience, the military historian should be familiar with the literature of three or four different disciplines. In addition to his knowledge of history, he has to follow the literature of sociology, political science and international relations, as well as that of the professional soldier, in order to keep up with developments in his field. To teach military history properly, the historian should be able to deal with the sociological aspects of the military profession, and with the military as a social institution, and with the military as a social class. The social aspects of military history are extremely important, and not enough scholars have undertaken that kind of research. Similarly, the military historian must be able to deal with the political, institutional and international aspects of his subject—not to mention its psychological dimensions.

I have not been to all of the Academy's military history symposia, but I have been to most of them. It seems to me the meetings are getting larger, more varied and more cosmopolitan. It is very nice to see such a wide sprinkling of people in the audience from all the services, as well as from a large academic constituency. We owe Colonel Hurley and his staff a debt of gratitude for creating what has become an important institution for military historians: a place to come once every 2 years to meet all your friends and to learn more about military history.

DISCUSSION

SHY: We have about 10 minutes for general discussion and questions. I would love to use part of it to throw in some of my own thoughts, but I will not even tell you how much I like Dave Palmer's phase analysis of the Revolutionary War strategy from the American side. Questions then.

GEORGE COLLINS (Wichita State University): Let me address my question to you, Professor Shy, although probably any of you could answer it. Professor Billias, in introducing his session, stated what seemed to me to be a cliché: limited wars reflected the limited ends of the eighteenth century. Professor Morton also just noted that one of Britain's problems was that this war became an imperial war, a global war, a world war. It seems to me that this concept of a limited war for limited ends in the eighteenth century only holds true if you have European bias. It seems to me that the War of the Spanish Succession, fought over the combination of France and Spain and from which the Peace of Utrecht resulted, was not a limited war for a limited end, but was a limited war for grand design. Also, I think that the Seven Years War, which cost France the sub-continent of India and all its mainland possessions in North America, was again not limited war for limited ends. I suggest that viewed this way the Revolutionary War was a very large and global war. I would like to hear some comments. Do others feel that there is something wrong with the cliché about limited war for limited ends and that it does not describe some of the major military outcomes of eighteenth-century warfare?

SHY: Since you addressed the question to me, I must say that I agree with you up to a point. I think that you can exaggerate the limited character of eighteenth-century warfare. Limited warfare tends to describe the outcomes better than it describes the intentions. Wartime leaders, including leaders in the American Revolutionary War, do not seem to see their struggles as limited. George III had a very well worked out domino theory of the American Revolution which said that if we let these colonies go, then the West Indies will be next; then we are going to be fighting in Ireland and finally on the streets of Westminster in the city of London. He really believed that the British Empire would begin to fall apart, piece by piece, if you countenanced rebellion in America. As a war leader he, wrongly or rightly, felt and certainly acted on the view that this was a war that was going to decide whether the British Empire would continue to exist. I think that you can exaggerate the neatly limited character, the kind of chess-like diplomacy relationship, of war and politics in the eighteenth century, but George Billias should be able to respond and Lou Morton and Ted Ropp would like to get a word in on this. Maybe George should have a

chance to defend himself so long as he has been accused of uttering a cliché.

BILLIAS: Let me make clear that when we talk about limited warfare, we are talking about war and society. In the eighteenth century there was a real effort to confine the fighting to professional fighting forces. Now that, it seems to me, is the way the war began. That was conventional thinking and was the way it was seen by the British and by the Americans. When you get provincial war forces, citizen soldiers, involved in the war increasingly by British commanders, then it becomes much more of an unlimited war. We are not talking about the war aims, we are talking about how much of the society will be involved. Does that satisfy you?

COLLINS: No, that does not satisfy me, because I think the answer is a cliché. France's loss of India, France's loss of North America, and the failure to combine the dynasties of France and Spain do not reflect limited ends. Therefore, I think limited warfare is a cliché. I will agree with you that it was limited in terms of a professional army, but not in the limited ends.

BILLIAS: I am sorry, but this was the way in which I was using the term. I would rest on that.

Brigadier General NOEL F. PARRISH, USAF (Ret.) (Trinity University): I am a little concerned about the perspective of time that we get in the short time of this symposium. To me it adds up to Washington being the only figure that was left alive after the end of the Revolution. I think it is accidental, but just look at what we have heard. The British could not win so long as the Americans kept fighting. That is a very important proviso. Of course, that is what the British were gambling that we would not do, so it is not surprising they made the gamble; but it seems that only one man kept the Americans fighting--Washington. Then we study the officers, nearly all of whom--especially the top ones--were willing to quit. Only Washington held them together. Then we had a sort of computer study of the men who, we find out, were not a bit enthusiastic either. Maybe we have glossed a little too much over the patriotism, the dedication and the sacrifices of lots of these other people. Maybe we have covered them up a bit like a "Cold Blooded Luke" and forgotten that some of them made no small contribution by fighting for a year under Revolutionary conditions. Either we have done that or the Revolution was a one-man performance or, pardon me, a two-person performance by George and Martha Washington supported by a completely indifferent and fickle cast of thousands.

SHY: Colonel Palmer has the floor.

PALMER: The question is--could the British have won the war? I would suggest that there is an opposite side to the question: could the Americans have lost the war? That might be worth investigating. It is possible that Washington could have been shot early in the war or have died from a fit of apoplexy and that something other than the United States that we now know could have emerged. As John Shy said, the fact is that the Americans did win; but were we fated to win? Might there not have been some split? We may have won some states and lost some states. Maybe we could have lost the West. Might we have become the Balkan states of America? Might we have become some sort of dominion like Canada? I would propose that there might have been some other outcome than the American victory. That is not the opposite of the British defeat.

MORTON: That is not the opposite question. We could have had a military victory and still have had all the things about which you are talking. It was 1789 that gave us a United States, and not 1781, or 1783. So I do not think it is quite the same question. I do not think Washington was the central figure in winning independence. He simply led the field. There is too much emphasis on Washington. Although he was terribly important, I do not think the outcome of that war depended upon General Washington.

SHY: I do not think you or Dave will ever quite resolve that question. Before I turn the proceedings over to Colonel Hurley, who gave me strict orders to stop at 4:25, I want to say in conclusion that these papers dealt with important and very difficult historical problems in the Revolutionary War. You have had the view from the top down, with Ira Gruber, with Admiral Hayes, with Dave Palmer, with George Scheer, and with Squadron Leader Brett's ruminations; you have had the view from the bottom up, with Bob Calhoon, with Dick Kohn, with John Sellers, and with Linda DePauw's very interesting discussion of that neglected 80%, or maybe even 90% of the population. I would not dare to categorize your comments, you, as either one or the other. They defy categorization. I think that the critics, both those assigned and those from the audience, have done much to sharpen the impression that these papers have made on all of us. And this sounds like the old stuff at the end of any conference, but rarely have I heard historical discussions carried on this long at such a uniformly high and interesting level, and seldom have I left a long conference feeling that it had all been so pleasant and worthwhile. I know that I speak for everyone in saying that we have learned a great deal, Colonel Hurley and your associates; thank you very much.

HURLEY: The time has arrived to close out these 2 fine days; but before we go, on behalf of General Allen and all of us here at the Academy let me thank, first of all, the participants who did such an excellent job. In particular, I would like to thank Squadron Leader John Brett who only said, "yes sir," when I asked him to volunteer. Second, I want to thank all of those who provided so much help in the planning of this program—notably Lou Morton and Ted Ropp out in San Francisco, Lieutenant Colonel Dave MacIsaac, and Major Gary Anderson. Third, we want to thank all of you for coming. All of us in the department—officers, secretaries, and history majors—have had a first-rate, stimulating experience over these 2 days, stimulating both intellectually and socially in hosting you.

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